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# TIME

## The Man in the Middle

Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelensky** on being caught between Putin and Trump

By **Simon Shuster**





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# TIME

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# Conversation

## TO IMPEACH, OR NOT

RE “A NATIONAL TEST” [Nov. 18]: In Lindsey Graham’s tearful tribute to John McCain at the latter’s funeral, he said, “Don’t look to me to replace this man. Look to me to remember what he was all about and try to follow in his footsteps.” I cannot believe that McCain would have treated the current Trump impeachment hearings with such contempt, and based on this, there is no prospect whatsoever of Graham replacing McCain.

*Rod Baker,*  
FISH HOEK, SOUTH AFRICA

RE “YOU CAN’T IMPEACH IF There Is No Crime” [Nov. 18]: I was disappointed by Robert Ray’s argument against impeachment. If the framers of the Constitution intended a legal process, they would have given the decision to the Supreme Court, not Congress. Of course, these days, it is unlikely that members of Congress will vote according to the facts, rather than by party. Ray’s view that the Democratic House is “intemperate and unreasonable” and that the Republican Senate “has the requisite neutrality” attests how an intellectually honest solution is at least as unlikely to come from heavily biased lawyers as from heavily partisan politicians.

*Peter Kraneveld,*  
EPINAY-SUR-ORGE, FRANCE

I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED reading this segment, if only because it contains two clear viewpoints: the case for and the case against impeachment. That is how I expect journalism to work: present readers with alternative views and all the facts, and let them decide for themselves.

*Margit Alm,*  
ELTHAM, AUSTRALIA

## INDEPENDENTS ARE KEY

RE “OFF-YEAR VOTES Deliver Bad News for the GOP” [Nov. 18]: Democratic National Committee Chair Tom Perez states, “In Trump country, they now see the President for what he is. And they’re coming back to the Democratic side.” That variety of hubris is why we find ourselves saddled with the current vacuity that passes itself off as leadership. In this country, we have what can best be described as a volleyball plutocracy. Republicans serve, screw up, then it’s the Democrats’ turn—because the populace grows weary of the current clown car that is running the show—and vote the other way. The cycle repeats itself ad nauseam. Democrats should focus on independent voters and demonstrate to them that change is necessary, not simply assert that their side has the moral high ground. Otherwise we’ll end up with an

additional four years of the current “stable genius” occupying the White House.

*Jonathan Quick,*  
SOUTHAMPTON, PA.

## THE CRIMINALS BENEFIT

RE “DIMMING THE LIGHTS” [Nov. 18]: The criminal enterprises that engage in victimizing women would like nothing better than to get people to support their attempts to shut down their competition—the legal, safe workers in Amsterdam’s red-light district. Let’s hope they do not succeed.

*Thomas M. Gearing,*  
PISGAH FOREST, N.C.

## ONE PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

RE “PUT YOUR FAITH IN Science” [Nov. 18]: Naomi Oreskes’ intent to promote science is welcome, but her statements that “the scientific method doesn’t work” and that it “isn’t what scien-

tists actually do” are wrong. She instead describes peer review as the process that advances knowledge. However, peer review is only one essential component of the scientific method, which consists of: 1. asking a question, 2. posing a hypothetical answer, 3. executing falsifiable experiments to test it, 4. evaluating the results, and 5. modifying the hypothesis in light of the results. Let’s be clear: the scientific method works.

*Sally Oey,*  
ANN ARBOR, MICH.

## SETTING THE RECORD

**STRAIGHT ▶** In the Nov. 18 issue, the review of *Honey Boy* misidentified the actor who plays the psychologist in the film. It is Laura San Giacomo. In the same issue, a column by Neal Katyal and Sam Koppelman misstated the way in which Richard Nixon left the presidency. He resigned. And a photo caption in “The News Gets to Move On” misstated where the staff of the Capital Gazette was pictured. It was in Washington, D.C.



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# 'He's two-faced.'

**DONALD TRUMP,**

U.S. President, on Dec. 4, at a NATO summit, after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was caught on a hot microphone apparently complaining about Trump with other world leaders



## 14,315

Number of Thanksgiving Day inquiries to the Butterball Turkey Talk Line, which provides answers to turkey-related cooking questions

## 18,000

Age, in years, of a prehistoric puppy found frozen in permafrost in Russia

## \$9.4 billion

Amount Americans spent online on Cyber Monday, Dec. 2, a record for the retail holiday

## 'We are still in. The United States is still in.'

**NANCY PELOSI,**

Speaker of the House, pledging at U.N. climate talks in Madrid on Dec. 2 to continue fighting climate change despite the Trump Administration's plan to withdraw from the Paris Agreement

**Spuds**  
A weak potato harvest brought fears of a possible french-fry shortage



**Suds**  
An experiment bound for the ISS could bring Budweiser closer to brewing beer in space

## 'I just didn't expect it from royalty.'

**VIRGINIA GIUFFRE,**

Jeffrey Epstein accuser, in a BBC interview about her allegations that Britain's Prince Andrew had sex with her when she was 17; he denies the claims



## 'I'M DONE BEING QUIET.'

**LISA PAGE,**

former FBI lawyer, in a Dec. 1 tweet after she spoke to the Daily Beast; she became a target of President Trump's ire after her August 2016 text messages about him became public

## 'Facebook is legally required to tell you that the Singapore government says this post has false information.'

**FACEBOOK,**

notice on a post from a blog critical of the government; Singapore invoked a controversial "fake news" law to get the social network to add the note



# The Brief

**SLOG OF WAR**  
A U.S. soldier rests  
on a flight to Kabul in  
August 2018; the war in  
Afghanistan is nearly  
two decades old



**INSIDE**

*MALTA REELS IN THE  
AFTERMATH OF A MURDER*

*A PEARL HARBOR SAILOR IS  
FINALLY LAID TO REST*

*WILLIAM RUCKELSHAUS IS  
REMEMBERED BY JOHN DEAN*

PHOTOGRAPH BY EMANUELE SATOLLI FOR TIME



## FOREIGN POLICY

### A mixed message on Afghan peace

By Kimberly Dozier

**P**RESIDENT DONALD TRUMP HAD BARELY BEEN in Afghanistan for a few hours on Nov. 28 when he made three bold declarations. In coming days, Trump said, the Taliban would stop their attacks and stalled peace talks would resume. But, he also told Afghan officials, the U.S. would keep a small number of troops there indefinitely. “They didn’t want to do a cease-fire, but now they do want to do a cease-fire,” Trump said of the Taliban, during a press conference at Bagram Airfield, north of Kabul, roughly 13 hours after flying from Maryland under the cover of darkness for a surprise Thanksgiving visit to the troops. “It will probably work out that way.”

Unfortunately, that’s not how the Taliban see it. The combination of notions Trump floated is a deal breaker for the militants who have been waging war against the Afghan government and foreign troops for nearly two decades. For starters, the Taliban aren’t laying down their weapons before brokering a full withdrawal of U.S. troops. Leaving any American forces in the country is also likely to stymie talks. “The cease-fire will start only after the signing of the peace agreement,” Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen tells TIME.

Any compromise must come from Trump, Shaheen adds, since it was he who canceled a planned peace summit at Camp David, via Twitter on Sept. 7. “In our view, the ball is in the U.S. court,” Shaheen says. “They called off the talks. It is up to them to come to the table if they want peaceful solution of the issue.”

So it’s hard to say who Trump was trying to reach with these new messages. In their delivery, he muddled his 2019 State of the Union pledge to end U.S. involvement in “endless wars.” And aides have surely told him that even though he did give the Taliban half of what they want—a public declaration from the U.S. President that he is serious about resuming talks—negotiations are unlikely to move forward under the conditions he set out. That leaves any hope of a peace deal where it was when Trump came to office: nowhere. As talks drag on, the delays can be measured in lives: in the first nine months of 2019, there were more than 8,200 civilian casualties, according to the U.N.

**THIS MESS NOW FALLS** to U.S. peace envoy Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad to clean up. Khalilzad, who was in Kabul on Dec. 4, must try to talk the Taliban into reducing attacks on U.S. and Afghan forces without calling it a cease-fire, while convincing Trump and the Afghan government that he’s achieved a cease-fire in all but name.

His job will be complicated by Trump’s alleged assurances to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. Current and former Afghan officials briefed on the leaders’ conversations during Trump’s visit said Trump promised the Afghan government a greater say in future discussions, an idea the Taliban have long rejected. They also said Trump told the Afghan government he’d maintain some U.S. troop presence in the country, echoing comments he made earlier this year. “We’re going to keep a presence there. We’re reducing that presence very substantially, and we’re going to always have a presence,” Trump told Fox News Radio in August. Administration officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Both points constitute a major reversal of the earlier draft deal between the U.S. and the Taliban, which took nearly a year to negotiate. It included a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops as well as special operations and intelligence operatives, Taliban spokesman Shaheen told

TIME in October. On that condition, the Taliban would agree to stop targeting U.S. forces as they withdrew, though it would continue to fight Afghan forces while the militants and a delegation of Afghan leaders separately hammered out a way forward in later talks to be held in Oslo.

Trump abruptly walked away from that deal in a blistering September tweetstorm, just after canceling the secret summit at Camp David. The plan had been to try to broker an agreement between the militants and Afghan President Ghani, who’d accepted the invitation, in the style of the 1978 Camp David accords. Trump blamed the talks’ collapse on a Taliban bombing in Kabul that killed 12 people, including an American soldier, but Shaheen said it was the Taliban that balked at traveling to Washington without having a deal and cease-fire already in place.

One thing to emerge in the post-Thanksgiving haze is that Trump’s position toward the Taliban seems to have hardened, perhaps because of criticism from retired generals and lawmakers like Senator Lindsey Graham. “I don’t know why in the world we would restart talks with the Taliban unless they renounce violence,” Graham tells TIME.

The Taliban delegation in Doha has always insisted there is no cease-fire without a deal, and no deal without a full withdrawal. But they too are also facing a weary and impatient fighting force that was disappointed by the derailing of talks in September.

And for most Afghans, the fresh confusion Trump has thrown into the peace process isn’t likely to change much. “One of the real frustrations in the last year is that the talks have been going on, but for many in the countryside, it feels like the fighting has escalated,” says Kate Clark, co-director of the Kabul-based Afghanistan Analysts Network. “From the Taliban or the Afghan government and U.S. side ... from airstrikes and night raids. And there’s no accountability for any of it.” □

18

Number of years U.S. troops have been in Afghanistan

3,804

Number of Afghan civilian war-related deaths in 2018

2,440

Number of U.S. military deaths in Afghanistan since 2001



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**SHARED GRIEF** Leanne O'Brien, center, took part in a ceremony in Cambridge, England, on Dec. 2 to honor her boyfriend, Jack Merritt, 25, and Saskia Jones, 23, who were killed on Nov. 29 in a terrorist attack near London Bridge. The Cambridge graduates were stabbed by Usman Khan, 28, who had been previously convicted of a terrorist plot in 2012. Khan, who wore a fake suicide vest, was tackled by bystanders who wielded a narwhal tusk and a fire extinguisher before he was shot dead by police.

## THE BULLETIN

### Amid fallout from journalist's death, Malta's Prime Minister will step down

**WHEN MALTA'S PRIME MINISTER JOSEPH Muscat** announced Dec. 1 that he would step down, the news was both sudden and a long time coming. His decision was prompted by new arrests in the 2017 murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia, a Maltese journalist who had investigated corruption at the highest levels of the country's government. More than two years have passed since a bomb detonated under the driver's seat in her rental car, but—even after Muscat's decision—the political crisis that was triggered by her death continues.

**RENEWED REVOLT** The investigation into Caruana Galizia's unsolved murder took a turn after the Nov. 20 arrest of Maltese businessman Yorgen Fenech, whom media reports have linked to payments to senior government figures. Muscat's chief of staff and two ministers stepped down as police said they would widen the scope of the investigation. On Nov. 30, Fenech was charged with complicity in the murder and pleaded not guilty. A day later, thousands of protesters took to the streets of Malta's capital, Valletta, demanding Muscat resign. Within hours, he announced that he would.

**NOT ENOUGH** Muscat said he would give up his post as leader of Malta's Labour Party on Jan. 12, but didn't give a date for the end of his premiership, which angered Caruana Galizia's family. On Dec. 2, they filed a judicial request calling for Muscat himself to be investigated over the murder. "Muscat needs to get out of office, out of the party, and out of the parliament," Corinne Vella, Caruana Galizia's sister, tells TIME. "He should have nothing to do with the investigation, other than as a suspect."

**STILL FIGHTING** Malta is the E.U.'s smallest nation, but its government has been embroiled in outside corruption allegations. The head of a European Parliament delegation that met with Muscat in Malta on Dec. 3 for a fact-finding mission said that Muscat should relinquish power now, and Caruana Galizia's family is urging European lawmakers to consider sanctions if he doesn't. In her final blog post, published just before her murder, Caruana Galizia wrote, "There are crooks everywhere you look now. The situation is desperate." In life she pushed against the tide. The effort continues without her. —RACHAEL BUNYAN

## NEWS TICKER

### Harris ends presidential campaign

California Senator Kamala Harris suspended her run for the White House on Dec. 3. The Democrat surged after the July debate but **struggled to maintain her position in the polls and with donors**. The week also saw the end of lower-profile bids from former Pennsylvania Congressman Joe Sestak and Montana Governor Steve Bullock.

### Putin signs 'foreign agent' law

Russian President Vladimir Putin approved a bill Dec. 2 that will allow Russia to **declare journalists and bloggers "foreign agents"** if they distribute content and receive funding from abroad. Journalists and human-rights activists say the law is meant to allow the Kremlin to silence its critics.

### Georgia Senate pick rankles Trump allies

Georgia Governor Brian Kemp on Dec. 4 named businesswoman Kelly Loeffler to replace U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson, who is set to retire at the end of 2019. The pick **ran counter to President Trump's wish** to have Representative Douglas A. Collins fill the seat.



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## NEWS TICKER

### Iran shakes fist over nuclear deal

The U.N.'s atomic watchdog group has accused Iran of a number of violations of the 2015 nuclear deal, but Tehran warned Dec. 1 that it might **"seriously reconsider" its commitments to the group** if the European parties to the deal activated a dispute mechanism that could lead to sanctions.

### Supreme Court hears gun case

The Supreme Court sat for arguments Dec. 2 in a suit over a New York City restriction on transporting guns, the court's **first Second Amendment case in nearly 10 years**. After the Supreme Court granted the review, legislators mooted the restriction, leading to debate over whether the court should issue a ruling at all.

### Protests in India after vet's murder

Protests flared across India on Dec. 1 after the **alleged gang rape and murder of a 27-year-old veterinarian**, whose charred body was found Nov. 28 near Hyderabad; four men have been arrested. Demonstrators demanded new laws to protect women from widespread violence.

## GOOD QUESTION

### Why are remains from Pearl Harbor still being identified?

WHEN THE REMAINS OF U.S. NAVY SAILOR Victor Patrick "Pat" Tumlinson are buried on Dec. 7 in his hometown of Raymondville, Texas, 78 years will have passed since he was killed in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Tumlinson, just 19, and 428 others perished aboard the battleship U.S.S. *Oklahoma* when it was sunk in the surprise attack, which killed 2,403 American personnel, sank or damaged 21 ships, and resulted in the U.S. entry into World War II. And of the people killed at Pearl Harbor, the remains of more than 1,300 are still classified as unidentified.

Now, the Department of Defense, armed with new technology and a record of success identifying those killed in more recent conflicts, is making a concerted effort to sift through some of the remains—starting with those recovered from the *Oklahoma*.

A previous attempt in the 1940s to identify service members who were recovered from the wreckage ultimately failed because many remains had been mixed together and researchers were limited to the forensic methods of the era, like dental records. The remains were buried as unknowns in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii by 1950.

The U.S.S. *Oklahoma* is playing an important role in sparking new hope that the lost service members can be identified and

given proper burials, but it's a painstaking process. When the military exhumed a coffin of remains from the ship's wreckage in 2003, researchers found traces of about 100 people.

Investigators are using several tools in their work, including collecting mitochondrial DNA samples from the families of lost service members and matching them to samples from the remains. In the past four years alone, the Department of Defense has identified about 200 people from the *Oklahoma*, and that's just one ship.

Timothy McMahon, the director of Department of Defense DNA Operations, says that the success of the *Oklahoma* project gave the military more confidence that the latest identification technology was accurate enough to justify digging up the commingled remains of other service members.

And so, Tumlinson is returning home nearly eight decades after his death. His family says the burial will help to bring closure, even after all these years. Although his sacrifice was honored in Raymondville at the local Veterans of Foreign Wars post and marked with a headstone in the cemetery, his mother struggled with not having been able to bury him, says his niece Cathy Ayers. "Until the day she died, she said, 'I wish they could bring my boy home,'" Ayers says.

On Dec. 7, his remains will be accompanied by an honor guard detail and laid to rest beside his mother. Several dozen family members from across the country plan to attend. "At the end of the day," says Tumlinson's nephew, James Patrick Tumlinson, "that's where he belongs." —TARA LAW

## FREIGHT

### Delivery disasters

A hazmat team responded to a Washington State movie theater after it received a package labeled "highly contagious human substance"—which turned out to be urine intended for a medical clinic. Here, other shipping snafus. —Alejandro de la Garza

#### SMUGGLING SLIP

In May, an Australian couple was mistakenly delivered a package containing \$7 million worth of methamphetamine.

They called the police, who were able to use that lead to make an arrest in the case.

#### AMAZON ARREST

A Massachusetts man who ordered a TV on Amazon was arrested in March for allegedly keeping a second TV that was wrongly delivered to his address. He claimed Amazon told him he had "nothing to worry about."



#### MISSILE MISTAKE

In 2007, six nuclear-tipped cruise missiles were accidentally transported from North Dakota to Louisiana on a **B-52 bomber**. Four U.S. Air Force officers were fired in the wake of the incident.



# TheBrief Milestones

## ARGUED

That grand-jury documents from the Mueller investigation **should not be released to House lawmakers**, in a brief filed on Dec. 2 by the Justice Department.

## ARRIVED

Teen climate activist **Greta Thunberg**, in Portugal, on Dec. 3, after crossing the Atlantic by boat. She's set to attend the U.N.'s climate summit in Madrid.

## REPORTED

That **reading and math performance** among U.S. teens has not improved significantly since 2000, per the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment, released Dec. 3.

## SUBMITTED

Amicus briefs against a **Louisiana abortion restriction** headed to the Supreme Court, by medical groups including the American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

## HOSPITALIZED

Former President **Jimmy Carter**, 95, with an infection. Carter, who was released Dec. 4, also had brain surgery just last month.

## INTRODUCED

A law that would cap foreign political donations in **New Zealand** at \$33, on Dec. 3.

## ANNOUNCED

Google founders **Sergey Brin and Larry Page**, on Dec. 3, that they're leaving their respective roles as president and CEO of its parent company, Alphabet.



*Ruckelshaus, who resigned rather than carry out President Nixon's orders, testifies before a U.S. Senate committee in 1973*

## DIED

### William Ruckelshaus

*Saturday Night Massacre resister*

**By John Dean**

I MET WILLIAM RUCKELSHAUS—WHO DIED ON NOV. 27 AT 87—at the Department of Justice in 1969, when he ran the civil division and I was Associate Deputy Attorney General.

Ruckelshaus came late to Watergate. He'd been the first administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, starting in 1970, before he took over the FBI in April 1973; President Nixon thought Ruckelshaus looked like an FBI director because he was kind of jowly.

I didn't have regular dealings with him, but one of the more interesting conversations we had over the years was about the Saturday Night Massacre, the firing of special prosecutor Archibald Cox on Oct. 20, 1973. Nixon told Attorney General Elliot Richardson to fire Cox. Richardson wouldn't do it and resigned. White House chief of staff Al Haig called the Deputy Attorney General—which was Ruckelshaus' job by then. Ruckelshaus wouldn't fire Cox either. Solicitor General Robert Bork, the third in line, did. Later, Ruckelshaus told me he and Richardson had pleaded with Bork to do it, because if he resigned too, there was no clear next step. They worried about chaos: Who would sign orders?

Ruckelshaus also said that Cox, his former law-school professor, told him, "You did just what I expected you to do." I think everyone who knew Ruckelshaus thought he was an honest, fair individual who would do the right thing in virtually any situation.

*Dean, who was White House counsel during Watergate, is now a CNN commentator*

## DIED

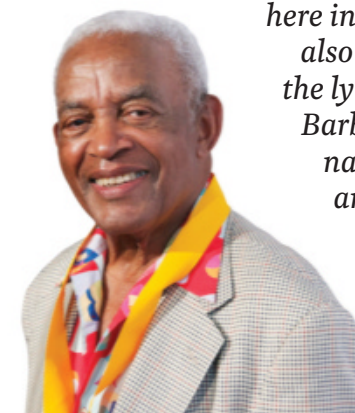
### Irving Burgie

*Calypso king*

WHEN CALYPSO MUSIC exploded out of the Caribbean in the 1950s, its unexpected success among mainland audiences was in large part thanks to musician and folklorist Irving Louis Burgie.

Burgie, who died Nov. 29 at 95 and was known professionally as Lord Burgess, is best known for his collaborations with Harry Belafonte, with whom he shared a New York City birthplace and Caribbean heritage. Belafonte was connected to Burgie by a friend who called him "the black Alan Lomax—a walking library of songs from the islands"—and the pair quickly hit it off. Burgie was a writer on most of the songs on Belafonte's 1956 *Calypso*, which became the first album to sell a million copies in the U.S.

The album's most enduring song was "Banana Boat Song (Day-O)," which Burgie, with William Attaway, adapted from a Jamaican folk tune. The song was emblematic of his approach: melding irresistible melodies with fresh lyrics that reflected working-class island life. In paying homage to his heritage, Burgie forged a song that would be covered countless times not just in the Caribbean but around the world. —ANDREW R. CHOW



*Burgie, seen here in 2012, also wrote the lyrics to Barbados' national anthem*



## Fear of mass shootings fuels a thriving bulletproof business

By Melissa Chan

LORI ALHADEFF IS HAUNTED BY THE FACT THAT SHE DID not send her 14-year-old daughter to school with a bulletproof backpack. The mother of three had wanted to buy one but never got around to it. By Feb. 14, 2018, it was too late. Her first child, Alyssa, was fatally shot trying to hide under a classroom table at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., where 16 others were killed. “I wish to this day that I did give that protection to Alyssa. It could have saved her life,” Alhadeff says. “Obviously, I regret that.”

After the massacre, Alhadeff bought bulletproof backpacks for her two sons, who are now 15 and 12. “I have peace in my heart for my two boys, at least, that I’m doing everything in my power to protect them,” says Alhadeff, who won’t let her sons go to school without the backpacks.

With dozens of people killed so far in mass shootings in the U.S. in 2019, thousands of Americans like Alhadeff are seeking security through an influx of products marketed to those scared of being shot or of losing loved ones to gun violence. Backpacks that double as shields are sold by major department stores, including Home Depot and Bed, Bath & Beyond. There are bulletproof hoodies for children; protective whiteboards and windows; armored doors and anchors to keep shooters out of classrooms; and smart cameras powered by artificial intelligence that alert authorities to threats. In Fruitport, Mich., officials are building a \$48 million high school specially designed to deter shooters, with curved walls to reduce lines of sight, bulletproof windows and a special locking system.

In 2017, U.S. schools spent at least \$2.7 billion on security systems, on top of the money spent by individuals on things like bulletproof backpacks, the IHS Markit consulting firm reported. In 2014, the figure was about \$768 million, IHS said. There’s no known case of bullet-resistant items saving students from a shooting—none of the industry leaders who spoke with TIME could cite a case—and critics of the industry say the only beneficiaries of these so-called security measures are the people making money off them. In fact, most of the bulletproof items, including backpacks and hoodies, would protect against handguns but not against the assault-style weapons often used in high-casualty attacks. Assault-style weapons were used in the Parkland shooting and in the Sandy Hook Elementary School attack in December 2012.

“These companies are capitalizing on parents’ fears,” says Shannon Watts, a mother of five who founded the gun-control-advocacy group Moms Demand Action following the Sandy Hook shooting, which killed 20 first-graders and six educators.

In September, as students were returning to school, Sandy Hook Promise, a gun-violence-prevention nonprofit led by family members of Sandy Hook victims, released



▲  
*Bulletproof backpacks for sale in August at a store in Evanston, Ill.*

a video that used biting satire to highlight the country’s failure to prevent mass shootings. It showed cheerful children returning for classes and using their new clothes and school supplies to survive a shooting. One boy uses his skateboard to smash a window and escape; a girl uses her new socks to tie a tourniquet. The message is clear: these shootings should be prevented before kids get to the point of using tube socks to save classmates from bleeding to death.

But with efforts at gun-control legislation stalled as the Senate refuses to take up a House-passed bill that would require background checks for private gun sales, even critics of the booming security industry concede it’s unlikely to slow down. “There’s not a parent in the country who isn’t worried that their child will be the next victim of gun violence,” Watts says.

**THERE HAVE BEEN** more than 380 mass shootings—in which at least four people other than the shooter were

TERESA CRAWFORD—AP





injured or killed—so far this year in the U.S., according to the nonprofit Gun Violence Archive. This summer alone, 31 people were killed in back-to-back mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, and 10 others died in attacks in Gilroy, Calif., and Odessa, Texas. In the aftermath of each tragedy, bulletproof-product companies saw striking growth in profits. “It’s a business fueled by fear,” says Sean Burke, president of the School Safety Advocacy Council.

TuffyPacks, which sells ballistic shields that are inserted into backpacks, reported up to a 500% increase in sales after the shootings in El Paso and Dayton in early August. “Every time shootings occur, we see spikes in sales,” says TuffyPacks CEO Steve Naremore, 63, of Houston, who insists his company’s \$129 inserts fill consumer needs no differently than other safety equipment, like bicycle helmets. Guard Dog Security, a competing company that sells bulletproof backpacks that weigh up to 4.5 lb. and

cost up to \$299, couldn’t keep up with the orders. “They were selling out faster than we could get it back in stock,” says Yasir Sheikh, its 34-year-old CEO. Sheikh—who like Naremore declined to disclose revenue figures—launched his company in 2009 but didn’t see a huge demand until Sandy Hook.

The demand that follows mass shootings prompted Vy Tran, 26, to quit her job and use \$100,000 in savings to start selling homemade bulletproof hoodies. Her company, Wonder Hoodie, began as a side business, which she launched after her next-door neighbor, a mother of two, was fatally shot in their Seattle neighborhood during a robbery in 2016.

Panicked after the killing, Tran says she searched online for body armor to protect her mother and younger brother, but the products she found were either too expensive or too heavy. So Tran, a health and safety consultant, ordered Kevlar online to make them herself. Tran was making an average of one or two hoodies a week until 58 people were killed at a Las Vegas music festival on Oct. 1, 2017. Suddenly there were 10 to 15 requests coming in every day.

“I couldn’t keep up with the orders,” says Tran. Wonder Hoodie has since fulfilled more than 1,000 orders for hoodies that cost up to \$600 and weigh up to 9 lb.

The industry merchandise isn’t all body armor. Chris Ciabarra and Lisa Falzone of Austin launched Athena Security, a smart-camera system, in 2017. Athena’s software detects 900 different types of guns and can send an alert and video feed to law enforcement if it senses a threat, like someone pointing a gun, according to Ciabarra. More than 50 schools, malls and businesses in the U.S. use the software from Athena, which charges \$100 a month for each camera it monitors. Given that schools and malls typically have 100 cameras building-wide, Athena could make more than \$100,000 a year monitoring just one school. The weapon-detection program has been installed in one of the two New Zealand mosques where

a suspected white supremacist opened fire in March, killing 51 worshippers. After the massacre, New Zealand’s Prime Minister banned assault weapons. But that’s not likely to happen in the U.S., says Ciabarra. “We’re not going to change the law and forbid guns. It’s not going to happen,” Ciabarra says. “People will have weapons.”

**SPENDING HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS** on a hoodie or backpack is not a viable option for many people. And while bulletproof products make some consumers feel safer, they could be having the opposite effect, according to school-safety experts like Michael Dorn, a former police chief in Georgia who’s executive director of Safe Havens International, a nonprofit that advises schools on security. Dorn worries that in a shoot-

ing, students with bulletproof backpacks may expose themselves to greater risk by standing in place and holding up their packs for protection instead of running away. “A focus on the armor could result in death because people don’t focus instead on things they need to do like lock a door,” says Dorn.

The products may also be distracting officials and parents from focusing on long-term solutions to gun violence, like preventive training and stronger gun laws, critics say. Rather than buy body armor or conduct active-shooter training drills, school officials and parents should focus more on early intervention strategies, including student-threat assessments and better student supervision, according to safety experts.

Alhadeff, whose daughter died in the Parkland massacre, knows the backpacks she bought for her sons are only the last layer of protection. To improve safety in other ways, she launched a national nonprofit, Make Our Schools Safe, and won a seat on the local school board, where she has pushed for legislation to make schools safer. “Before the shooting, my biggest fear was whether my children would do well on their tests,” Alhadeff says. “It’s sad and unfortunate that our society has come to this.” □

**‘It’s sad and unfortunate that our society has come to this.’**

LORI ALHADEFF,  
gun-safety advocate  
and mother of  
Parkland victim  
Alyssa Alhadeff



For the elusive and prolific **Theaster Gates**, the interesting things are those most people neglect

By **Belinda Luscombe**

THEASTER GATES IS SWOOPING AROUND AND through the audience like a low-flying eagle circling a lake. It's dark, but a band is playing Grace Jones covers, he's a very good roller-skater, and he trusts the smoothness of the floor he installed. Occasionally he straightens a bit and shouts, "This is not a conference!" and sometimes "This is not a f-cking conference!" It's the first night of Gates' fifth Black Artists Retreat, a weekend of discussions, performances and films dedicated this year to exploring "Sonic Imagination." But occasionally, because of the speakers and presentations, it verges on feeling like a conference. Hence the roller skates.

Gates is a potter-sculptor, who is also an urban planner, who is also an archivist, who is also a factory owner, who is also a bandleader, who is also a real estate developer who is also many other alsos, including a MacArthur "genius" grant recipient. "I came into the art world with a broad sense of life, and I've tried to maintain that broad belief over the narrowing effects of the art world, which can make you commit to one way of making," says Gates, 46, sitting in the opulently macho Veterans Room of the Park Avenue Armory, a former military installation turned New York City art space.

The alsos are deliberate, evidence of his distrust of categorization and his wariness about being labeled. "If you can say, 'I make paintings,' people really can sink their teeth into it because it's simpler," he says. "But I don't just make paintings. I feel like in some ways I'm living and in living there are multiple forms that my artistic practice takes."

Nevertheless, he will allow that on some occasions, he is given to create art—to make work, as artists like to say—about space. That space can be between the walls of a pot or of a neighborhood. "What does it mean for land to be vacant? What does it mean for land to be occupied?" he says. "How can art take an abandoned building from being abandoned to being activated and escape some of the political stuff?" Some people call this social-practice art: installations and performances that are also community-development projects. He calls it research.

One of the must-watch stories of the art world, Gates had exhibitions this year in Paris, Milan, Berlin, London and Los Angeles. In January 2020, museumgoers can see his work in Munich,

## GATES QUICK FACTS

### He's a prankster

He hosted a dinner party on plates he said were made by a Japanese ceramicist who'd married a black woman in Mississippi after World War II. No such person existed; he'd made the plates.

### He's pragmatic

Gates began to mix found art with his pottery to save money—and immediately got more interest from galleries.

### He's place-based

"When I feel things, they're attuned to a place," he says. "If you were to ask me the same questions in a different room, I'd probably say something different because I feel different."

Minneapolis, Liverpool and Atlanta. Or they can just walk through Chicago's South Side.

When he was hired at the University of Chicago in 2007 as a coordinator of arts programming, Gates bought a former candy store in Greater Grand Crossing, the impoverished neighborhood a few blocks from the school, and moved in. After the Great Recession hit, he bought the house next door and mined it for parts to turn into the Archives, a small library, then another ruin, which became the Black Cinema House (since moved) and the Listening House. These days he has significant real estate holdings, what landlords would call 80 doors, plus several hundred thousand feet of commercial industrial space in various states of use and renovation.

**HOW DOES ART** make a neighborhood better? When the city of Chicago sold Gates a derelict old bank for \$1, he and some collaborators tore out the marble urinal dividers and chopped them up into small art bonds, which he then sold for \$5,000 each, netting enough equity to start transforming the building into the Stony Island Arts Bank, a repository for objects as varied as house-music pioneer Frankie Knuckles' record collection and the archives of *Jet* magazine. Gates has now brought millions of dollars into the South Side via a network of sources, including his studio and his nonprofit Rebuild Foundation, his company Dorchester Industries, the university, the city and donor organizations that want to be part of something cool.

But art's about more than just money. Gates believes in adjacency. "What would happen if a poor person actually had access to the most beautiful, most important, most relevant art in the world?" he says. To bring one to the other he's experimented with institutionalizing work that has historically not been considered important or relevant in neighborhoods that have been abandoned. The block where he lives is now an arts corridor as well as a place to "demonstrate how my life as a middle-class person is better and a poor person's life might be better because we're adjacent to one another."

Gates' first exposure to the power of art was in the west Chicago Baptist





church his mother took him and his eight older sisters to every week. He has described the gospel singing there as a “protective hedge” from the grim realities beyond the church doors. No matter what was going on during the week, there was transformative beauty to be found, and created, on Sunday mornings. At college he studied urban planning, ceramics and religion, but began to focus on found art. Discarded wood became shoeshine booths, and decommissioned fire hoses became tapestries, reclaiming symbols of racial inequity for purposes of beauty.

The alsos of Gates infiltrate his approach to everything. He is a showy stuntman (remember those bathroom bonds) but also a serious art historian and theorist. His speaking style can veer from

***‘I thrive in a certain kind of complexity, and I don’t so much thrive in a certain kind of simplicity.’***

THEASTER GATES,  
urban planner, roller-skater  
and performance artist

lyrical to profane to deeply erudite to entirely streetwise. When the Armory asked what he’d like to do during his year as artist in residence, the professor talked about hosting a roller-skating party. The curators were dubious, citing the condition of the floor. So Gates, whose Dorchester Industries takes on apprentices to teach them trades, one of which is milling, decided he would replace the floor. “It’s not like I was like, ‘I’m a floor artist,’” he says. “The floor is banal. But when that room is cleared and it’s just the floor, I actually think that it’s a pretty significant work of art. It’s almost like a gift.” Gates the artist-renovator is also Gates the benefactor.

**THE ARMORY RETREAT**, the biggest of these convocations so far, and the first that was partly open to the public, was about sound. “We have experts who know the history of humming,” says Gates of the participants. “Humming as a protective device. Wailing as a form of healing. Silence as a kind of resistance.” While it may seem like a bank shot from the kind of art he has been pursuing, noise has been one of the boldest through lines of his work. In 2007, he co-founded the Black Monks of Mississippi, a musical group who are devoted to Southern black sonic traditions rather than to a deity. For him, music is another overlooked black cultural artifact worth collecting and revitalizing. Plus, it livened up the skating party that closed out the retreat.

Gates doesn’t have a lot of time for pottery these days. He’s in demand from city governments, philanthropies and art galleries. Perhaps that’s why his face seems to be settled in a permanently worried expression. “I thrive in a certain kind of complexity, and I don’t so much thrive in a certain kind of simplicity,” he says. For his next act, he’s thinking about giving away some of the real estate, what he calls “simplifying to start a new complex order.”

One thing that won’t change is his capacity for faith. Gates believes in art the way his mother believed in God. Neighborhoods, music, trades, building detritus or even mud before the potter’s wheel: to Gates, they are containers waiting for the transfiguring and redeeming power of creation. □



## Iraq in turmoil

An injured protester is rushed to treatment in Baghdad on Nov. 29. At least 400 people have been killed in clashes with Iraqi security forces since protests over endemic corruption, foreign meddling and high unemployment began in October. The country's Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi submitted his resignation on Nov. 30, but it could take weeks or months for a new government to form and be approved. Until then, Abdul-Mahdi and his ministers will serve in a caretaker government. Protests continued despite the resignation.

*Photographs by Ivor Prickett—The New York Times/Redux*  
► For more of our best photography, visit [time.com/lightbox](https://time.com/lightbox)







# LightBox

*Iraqi protesters rest on Nov. 22 at a shrine in Baghdad's Tahrir Square, built to honor those killed in the weeks of protest that have roiled the country*









# WE WILL NOT ROLL OVER.

## EXCEPT FOR BELLY RUBS.



Now is not the time to roll over. Every day, nearly 2,000 dogs and cats are killed in shelters across the country. It's time to adopt change and Best Friends Animal Society is leading the way. Working together with passionate people like you alongside shelters, rescue groups and other animal welfare organizations, we will Save Them All.

[save-them-all.org](http://save-them-all.org)



**SAVE  
THEM  
ALL**



# The View

WORLD

## THE DISUNITED KINGDOM

By Fintan O'Toole

In July, Prime Minister Boris Johnson gave himself an additional title no predecessor had assumed: Minister for the Union. The union in question is not the European one which Johnson is determined to leave. It is simply his own country, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The title betrays a deep anxiety. ▶

INSIDE

THE NEW GLOBAL  
TARIFF WARS

WHY DANISH PEOPLE  
ARE SO HAPPY



# TheView Opener

For in breaking one union with Europe, Brexit is endangering another: the centuries-old union of England with Wales, Scotland and (part of) Ireland. Assuming, as the polls predict, that Johnson's Conservative Party wins the U.K. general election on Dec. 12, he will have to grapple with that contradiction.

Five years ago, it was clear where the danger to the Union was coming from—mainly Scottish and Irish nationalism. Although Scotland voted to remain part of the U.K. in its 2014 plebiscite, the 45% who backed independence made it clear that the cause was now a mainstream proposition. And then there was, as always, the Irish Question. The 1998 peace deal that brought an end to the long civil conflict known as the Troubles acknowledged that the six northeastern counties that make up Northern Ireland can leave the U.K. whenever a majority of its population wishes to do so.

But the most pressing threat to the Union turned out to be not on the fringes but right at the center: a simmering crisis of national identity in England. That became obvious in the Brexit referendum of 2016. Support for leaving the E.U. was primarily an English phenomenon. Though Wales did vote narrowly for Brexit, Scotland and Northern Ireland voted heavily against it. It was the rich southeast of England and the old working class of the midlands and north that drove Leave to victory, the rebirth of Englishness as a political force.

**THIS SHIFT WAS 20 YEARS** in the making, a reaction to two big events at the end of the 20th century. One was the Belfast Agreement of 1998, which made Northern Ireland's membership in the U.K. an open question. The other was the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, giving Scots considerable powers over their own affairs. In hindsight, it was perhaps inevitable that many in England would start to ask the awkward question: What about us?

Why did they not ask that question before? Englishness, after all, is a very old political identity. The truth is that for most south of Hadrian's Wall and east of Offa's Dyke, "England" and "Britain" were synonyms. To them, the U.K. was England with a few funny bits attached. They did not have to consider how England fit into the larger multinational structure of the U.K. because they could take it for granted that they dominated it.

This complacency was a mark of the extraordinary success of the Union. It is not a natural entity but constructed piecemeal over a very long time. Wales—a country with its own language, traditions and

institutions—was incorporated into the English realm in 1536. The United Kingdom of Great Britain was established in 1707 when Scotland joined England and Wales. Ireland was added in 1801, but most of it left in 1922. Given this rather rickety construction, the big question is perhaps not why the Union is troubled but why it has held together so long.

The U.K. worked mostly because of four great binding forces: religion, the industrial revolution, empire and war. The idea of the U.K. as a haven of Protestantism on a continent dominated by hostile Catholic powers was powerfully unifying. The industrial revolution created a common way of life in its cities and towns. Empire allowed the Irish, Welsh and Scots to share its spoils and the prestige it conferred. And war bound people together as comrades. But each of these four forces is now essentially gone. Britain is outstandingly irreligious: little more than one third of the population are Protestant, and half say they have no religion at all. It is no longer an industrial economy: 81% of its output is based on services, not goods. The Empire is gone. And the bitter divisions over the Iraq war in 2003 shattered the belief that military triumphs bind the four nations together.

What could replace these crumbling pillars of the Union? One strategy was to try to appease the minority nationalisms by giving the Celtic nations their own parliaments. This worked up to a point but, especially in Scotland, the existence of a devolved parliament has actually led to a distinctive political culture. The other big idea was to rebrand the Union as Cool Britannia, an open, vibrant multicultural and multinational state. But Brexit has fatally undermined that idea: Britain does not look especially open, or cool, right now.

Is the end of the U.K. inevitable? Not in the short term. While Brexit makes Scottish independence more likely, it also makes it much more difficult: if Scotland were in the E.U., the hard border with England post-Brexit would be immensely problematic. And Ireland is nowhere near being ready to be united—the divisions that flared in the Troubles have still to be reconciled.

But what no one really imagined is that the future of the Union may not be in Scotland's or Ireland's hands. It is England, once the steady old spouse, that is increasingly angling for a divorce. While it is the business of making an exit from one Union, it may talk itself into leaving another.

*O'Toole is a columnist with the Irish Times and author of The Politics of Pain: Post-war England and the Rise of Nationalism*

*Johnson has styled himself Minister for the Union of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland*





## THE RISK REPORT

### Another round of tariffs shakes the economy, again

By Ian Bremmer



THE TRUMP administration went on offense again this month on a number of international trade disputes. On Dec. 2, the U.S. President tweeted his intention to impose new tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from Argentina and Brazil to retaliate against a “massive devaluation of their currencies, which is not good for our farmers.” The tariffs will hit both countries where it hurts since Brazil is one of the largest steel suppliers to the U.S. and Argentina’s economy was already so weak it turned a recent presidential election.

The Administration also threatened to slap tariffs of up to 100% on \$2.4 billion of imported French products like champagne, cheese and handbags (*zut alors!*) in response to a new digital-services tax imposed by France that Trump says unfairly damages U.S. tech companies. That move would further roil already contentious trade relations with the E.U.

Then there’s the biggest current trade dispute of them all. On Dec. 3, Trump commented during a speech in London at the NATO summit that “in some ways, I like the idea of waiting until after the [2020 U.S.] election for the China deal, but they want to make a deal now, and we will see whether or not the deal is going to be right.” Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross went further, saying that delaying a deal “takes off the table something that [China’s leaders] may think gives them some leverage.” That might be true—if Trump wins.

You might think the new aggressive posture on trade reflects Trump’s desire to punish leaders he doesn’t like. Argentina voted in October to replace Mauricio Macri, a Trump friend, with leftist Alberto Fernández, a Trump critic. French President Emmanuel Macron has angered

Trump with critical comments about NATO and other perceived slights. The U.S. President has been careful to praise China’s Xi Jinping, even as he singles out his country’s trade practices for sharp criticism, but China remains a prime political punching bag for Americans of both parties.

But Brazil’s President Jair Bolsonaro is no Trump critic. In fact, he’s a Trump imitator, and the U.S. President has warmly accepted this highest of all forms of flattery in face-to-face meetings with the Brazilian leader. That’s why Bolsonaro was taken aback by Trump’s latest tariffs and seems confident their friendship will help him talk Trump out of these new penalties. “I’m going to call him so that he doesn’t penalize us,” Bolsonaro reportedly said on Dec. 2. We’ll see.

**Perhaps he wants to throw punches to project strength at a time when he’s about to be impeached**

**WHY IS TRUMP** taking these actions and issuing these threats now? Maybe he is emboldened by the robust performance of U.S. stock markets in November and wants to use what he believes is undentable economic strength to drive harder bargains with countries he believes are taking advantage of the U.S. Perhaps he wants to throw punches to project strength at a time when he’s about to be impeached. Maybe his team feels a sense of urgency to get the best trade deals before the economy weakens and election-year pressures make Trump more risk-averse. Whatever the motives, markets have tumbled.

There is a lesson here for leaders who wish to avoid Trump’s wrath. Most leaders have tried some combination of friendship and flattery to build a predictable relationship. But Bolsonaro has now learned the lesson that Japan’s Shinzo Abe, Canada’s Justin Trudeau and others have learned before him: You can’t count on your personal relationship to spare your country trouble if Trump finds (even temporary) advantages in pushing you away. □

## SHORT READS

► Highlights from stories on [time.com/ideas](https://time.com/ideas)

### Fighting for control

Native American women have long had their reproductive autonomy restricted, including through mass sterilization in the 1970s, writes Brianna Theobald, author of *Reproduction on the Reservation*.

**“This history matters because knowledge of historical injustices can be a crucial ingredient in working toward a more just future.”**

### Pursuing happiness

Former Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen led one of the world’s happiest countries and says other Western democracies should rethink their priorities: **“Happiness may seem like a conceptual nicety for most political leaders, but it is a change in narrative that leaders sneer at to their peril.”**

### Making connections

For lack of nearby hospital obstetric care, many pregnant women in rural areas don’t get the care they need.

**“Some women show up for care only once—when they are about to give birth,”** writes FCC commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel. But, she argues, solutions to this problem exist, and technology can help.





World

*Zelensky on Nov. 30  
in his Kyiv office,  
which he likens to a  
“fortress that I just  
want to escape”*

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
PAOLO PELLEGRIN FOR TIME

# MAN IN THE MIDDLE

UKRAINE'S VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY IS  
CAUGHT BETWEEN A CRUMBLING U.S.  
ALLIANCE AND A HOSTILE RUSSIA  
**BY SIMON SHUSTER/KYIV**







# A YEAR IS A LONG TIME IN POLITICS.

Long enough in the case of Volodymyr Zelensky, the comedian elected President of Ukraine, to go from the set of his sitcom in Kyiv to the biggest political drama in the world, the one in which an American President may wind up getting impeached.

The Democrats have cast Zelensky as the victim of President Donald Trump's abuse of power, even as Republicans treat him as the witness key to proving Trump's innocence. Neither role is anywhere close to what Zelensky imagined for himself when he announced his run for the presidency on New Year's Eve, although he knew the job would be tough if he won, and often very unpleasant. Ukraine has been at war with Russia for the past five years, and his priority as President would be to stop that war from taking any more lives—a toll that is now more than 13,000 and counting.

That task would mean confronting Vladimir Putin, the Russian President who first ordered his troops into Ukraine in 2014. But Zelensky also wondered early on about Trump and the challenges of working with him. "What's he like?" he asked me when we first met in March, backstage at his comedy show, which he was using to promote his run for Ukraine's highest office. "Normal guy?" Wedged between the mirror and the costume rack inside his dressing room, the 41-year-old seemed confident, even cocky, in planning to win Trump over with little more than a wisecrack and a smile. "We'll figure it out," he told me. "I'm sure we'll get along."

Things have turned out rather differently. At the point in its history when Ukraine needs American support the most, Trump has gone out of his way to paint the nation as corrupt, unreliable and opposed to his Administration. Russia has rejoiced at these characterizations. And Ukraine's key allies in Europe have put on a mask of cool neutrality, voicing support for Zelensky while also seeking deals with Putin. Zelensky cannot even count on outspoken support from the U.S. diplomats and officials who testified so ardently about his country's strategic and moral import in front of the House Intelligence Committee. Several have quit amid the impeachment saga, others

will soon retire, and one tells TIME he is "laying low," at least until the issue of Ukraine becomes a bit less toxic in Washington.

Zelensky has come to accept that. When we met again in November, he had aged and changed far more than one might expect in the span of eight months. He was not just more tired or more of a realist but seemed to have caught a strain of the political disease he once detested and wanted to cure: cynicism. "I live here," he said as we sat down in the presidential chambers, looking around at the gilt and the imposing furniture, "like in a fortress that I just want to escape." One of his closest aides, Serhiy Shefir, who also spent his career in comedy before his friend became the President, could barely remember the time we had met in March at their variety show. "That was a different lifetime," he told me.

Like many people in Ukraine, Zelensky has followed coverage of the impeachment inquiry



▲  
*Andriy Yermak, a top adviser to Zelensky, at his office in Kyiv on Dec. 4*





unfold in the U.S. Congress. Not closely, he says, but enough to know what the Democratic majority has accused Trump of doing. Nearly every witness who testified before the inquiry confirmed that Trump blocked about \$400 million in aid to Ukraine this summer as a way to pressure Zelensky's government. Trump's aim, according to these witnesses, was to get Ukraine's help in his re-election campaign by launching spurious investigations into Trump's political rivals—in particular, his chief opponent in the 2020 race, former Vice President Joe Biden, whose son Hunter served on the board of a Ukrainian energy company. Several key witnesses called this a “quid pro quo,” or a favor for a favor. The Democrats said it was tantamount to bribery. Trump and his allies dismissed the hearings as a witch hunt intent on destroying his presidency.

Zelensky and his aides kept quiet about the hearings, not wanting to get dragged even deeper

into the political brawls of their most important ally. So in a roundtable interview with TIME and three other publications on Nov. 30, he addressed not the question at the heart of impeachment—what Trump wanted—but only his own motivations. “Look, I never talked to the President from the position of a quid pro quo. That’s not my thing,” he said. “I don’t want us to look like beggars. But you have to understand. We’re at war. If you’re our strategic partner, then you can’t go blocking anything for us. I think that’s just about fairness. It’s not about a quid pro quo.”

**FROM THE START** of his tenure, the man Zelensky entrusted to deal with the Americans was Andriy Yermak, who had previously worked for years as a lawyer for the President’s comedy troupe. Tall and imposing, with a booming voice and a habit of pounding the table for emphasis, Yermak had to manage the stream of requests to investigate Trump’s political rivals. At first they came up this spring from Trump’s personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani and later from various U.S. officials and diplomats drawn into the pressure campaign.

For Yermak it meant months of debating these investigations, whether to open them and how to announce them in public. The entire time, he says, he stuck to one principle: “Zelensky and his team will never get mixed up in the internal politics of the United States of America, under any circumstances.” They managed to hold that line long enough for a whistle-blower to raise the alarm about Trump and Giuliani’s conduct over Ukraine. By early September, as news of that complaint made its way to Congress, the package of aid to Ukraine was finally released.

Yermak’s relief did not last long. With the start of the impeachment inquiry in September, his country was again dragged into the center of a partisan brawl in Washington; only this time it was televised. “To be honest, we’re tired of these discussions,” he told me in his office on Dec. 4, the day the House Judiciary Committee took up the inquiry for a fresh round of witness testimony and debate. “The entire time you’ve spent talking about this, we’ve had people dying in the war out east.”

That war began as a Russian response to Ukraine’s revolution, which put the country on a path toward closer alignment with Europe in 2014 and forced the leaders of the old regime to seek refuge among their patrons in Moscow. The Kremlin struck back that February by sending troops to occupy Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula. By the spring, the Russian forces had sparked a bigger conflict in the region known as the Donbass, part of Ukraine’s industrial heartland in the east. Millions of people have since fled the fighting. Separatists armed by Moscow have seized control of two major cities in the Donbass. But even as Putin began this year to hand out Russian passports to the locals, he has shown no interest in absorbing



these lands into Russia, apparently content to let the conflict fester, a permanent drag on the success of his neighbor, its economy and its chance of integrating with the West.

That's the main drama Zelensky has tried to focus on, especially as Ukraine gets closer to another chance at peace. On Dec. 9 at the Élysée Palace in Paris, he is due to sit down for the first time with Putin. The encounter pits a onetime TV star barely six months into the job against a KGB veteran in power for two decades, who has fought brutal wars before and won them.

Away from the battlefield, things are also going Russia's way. The impeachment inquiry has thrown American policy toward Europe into confusion. A handful of the U.S. diplomats with the most clout in the region have quit in protest at Trump's treatment of Ukraine, given damning testimony against Trump in Congress, or both.

Meanwhile, Trump and his defenders have taken to repeating Putin's deflection claims that it was Ukrainian politicians rather than Russian spies who meddled in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. This was in flat contradiction to U.S. intelligence, which had concluded long before that Putin ordered his agents to steal and spread the secrets of the Hillary Clinton campaign. But Trump persisted in blaming Ukraine. Putin was elated. "Thank God," he told a business conference about two weeks before the peace talks in Paris. "Nobody is accusing us anymore of interfering in the U.S. elections. Now they're accusing Ukraine."

Zelensky has been left with no choice but to put his faith in the diplomats from Germany and France, who will serve as mediators at the talks in Paris. In an effort to reach these nations, he invited two of their best publications to the roundtable interview on Nov. 30, as well as a reporter from Poland, Ukraine's most ardent ally in the European Union.

One of them posed a seemingly straightforward question: Do you trust Putin? For Zelensky, it was a perfect chance to vent at his nation's tormentor and score some easy points at home. But he took it differently. "I don't trust anyone at all," he said. "Politics is not an exact science. That's why in school I loved mathematics. Everything in mathematics was clear to me. You can solve an equation with a variable, with one variable. But here we have all variables." Even among allies, Zelensky suggested, "Nobody can have any trust. Everybody just has their interests."

**IT WAS HARD** to fault Zelensky for feeling alone. Two days earlier he had spoken on the phone with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who had long held

the line when it came to Ukraine, demanding discipline among the Europeans even as some of them called for an end to the sanctions imposed against Russia for its attack against Ukraine. But the German wall around Zelensky thins where German business interests come in.

Even as Merkel prepared for the talks in Paris and called on Putin to participate, she was rushing to complete an energy project with Russia that could potentially cripple Ukraine's economy next year. Known as Nord Stream 2, the new pipeline would bypass Ukraine by carrying Russian fuel under the Baltic Sea to Germany. The estimated loss for Zelensky's government would be about \$3 billion per year in revenues from the transport of gas to Europe, a sum that dwarfs the \$400 million in aid that Trump held up this summer and early fall. "If it's built, then Ukraine will suffer enormously," Andriy Kobolyev, the head of Ukraine's state gas company, tells TIME. "The only way to stop this is U.S. sanctions."

But that does not seem likely, at least not before the pipeline is due to become operational at the start of 2020. Many of the U.S. officials who led the push against this project—chief among them John Bolton, Trump's most recently departed National Security Adviser—have left the Administration, and the impeachment inquiry has pushed the issue down on the U.S. agenda in Ukraine. "With the departure of those officials," says Kobolyev, "we see significantly less people in U.S. who are willing to discuss with us that matter. And that bothers me a lot right now."

It bothers Zelensky too. But there is not much he can do about it unless the U.S. has his back. Despite a death toll that climbs by the week, with nightly shelling near civilian areas and the persistent threat of sniper fire, the only active war in Europe seldom tops the evening news in Paris, Berlin or London. The Dec. 9 talks will be the first major peace summit in more than three years, a lull in negotiations that saw thousands of Ukrainians killed in their own homeland. Before that, there were hardly any breakthroughs in the conflict, and peace talks would go in circles as if that were their only goal. "People came to these meetings intending for nothing to happen," Zelensky says.

He doubts this time will be much different. The host of the summit, French President Emmanuel Macron, made some remarks in November that worried the Ukrainians. Russia is no longer an enemy of NATO, Macron said, and should be treated as a partner. In an interview with the *Economist*, the French leader also suggested that the NATO military alliance, which has guaranteed the security of Europe since the end of World War II, was "experiencing

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brain death” and may no longer be willing to defend its member states from an attack.

The remarks, which officials in Moscow celebrated, caused a rare clash between Merkel and Macron. During a private dinner in November, the German Chancellor is reported to have told Macron that she was tired of “picking up the pieces” after his disruptive statements. “Over and over, I have to glue together the cups you have broken so that we can then sit down and have a cup of tea together,” Merkel said, according to the *New York Times*.

Asked about these remarks during our interview, Zelenskyy looked surprised. “He really said that?” the President marveled, referring to Macron. Zelenskyy had not been paying much attention to the European squabbles; he has had enough problems to deal with at home. As the peace talks approached, hard-liners and militants inside Ukraine had accused him of capitulating to Russia, and his popularity ratings had gone into free fall. But he refused to yield to their demands to retake the Donbass by force.

“I won’t do it,” he told us. “I cannot send them there. How? How many of them will die? Hundreds

^  
*The presidency has changed Zelenskyy, aides say; his comedy career “was a different lifetime,” says one*

of thousands, and then an all-out war will start, an all-out war in Ukraine, and then across Europe.”

As the interview wound down, there was a final chance to ask him about the impeachment inquiry, though the topic suddenly seemed petty compared with the fires Zelenskyy was fighting. He didn’t brush the issue aside, though he clearly understood how dangerous it was, how high the risk of angering either side in the internal struggles of a superpower. “But I’m not afraid of the impeachment questions,” he said, forcing a smile.

The message he had for the U.S. and other “empires,” he said, was a plea to remember that Ukraine is a nation in its own right, not merely a tool in the games of foreigners. “I would never want Ukraine to be a piece on the map, on the chessboard of big global players, so that someone could toss us around, use us as cover, as part of some bargain.” But if these first six months of his tenure have taught Zelenskyy anything about the world, it’s that alliances can change as fast as the whims of the world’s decisionmakers. “That’s why,” he said as we stood to say goodbye, “on the question of who I trust, I told you honestly: no one.” □



*People use their phones to photograph President Donald Trump as he addresses a rally in Monroe, La., on Nov. 6*

# THE WAY WE





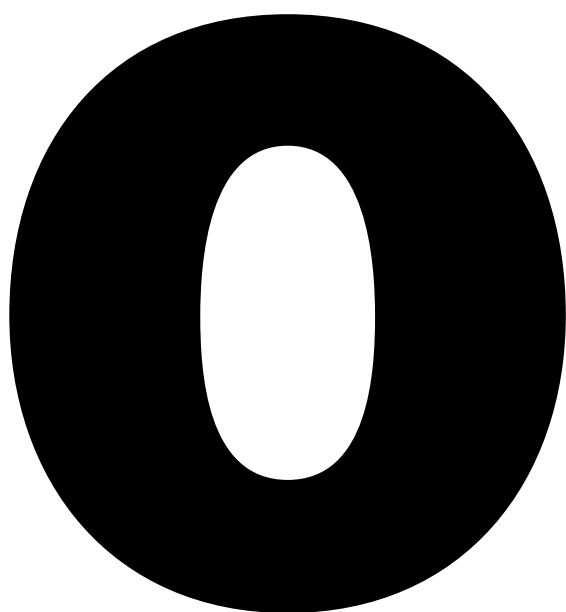


**Trump's campaign has  
turned impeachment  
into a fundraising asset  
with ads on Facebook,  
Instagram and other  
social-media platforms**

**By Brian Bennett/  
Sunrise, Fla.,  
and Chris Wilson**

# FIGHT BACK,





ONSTAGE IN THE PACKED, THUNDEROUS HOCKEY ARENA IN SUNRISE, Fla., President Donald Trump's campaign manager Brad Parscale urges the crowd to pull out their cell phones and text themselves onto the campaign's contact list. Their phones are key to helping Trump get re-elected in the face of his likely impeachment by the House. "The way we fight back," Parscale booms, "is to get online ourselves and get connected, sign up for emails." A slap shot away from Parscale, voter Alan Huber doesn't need to sign up. He is already connected and gets Trump campaign messages, most often by scrolling through Facebook. "I don't have to watch Fox or CNN or read TIME magazine or anything else. I will get anything important from my Facebook feed," says Huber, who's in his 60s and drove down the Florida coast from Boynton Beach on Nov. 26 to see Trump in person. "I think that the media doesn't fully appreciate the power of the Facebook feed."

The Trump campaign does. In the weeks since House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's Sept. 24 decision to launch an impeachment inquiry against Trump for using the power of his presidency to press a foreign country—Ukraine—to investigate a political rival, the Trump campaign hasn't run from Pelosi's impeachment push or settled into a defensive crouch. Campaign officials instead are leaning into the impeachment threat, using it to mobilize supporters and try to extract a political price—and millions of dollars in fundraising—from the Democrats' move. One of the single most powerful weapons in the Trump campaign's arsenal has been Facebook, which—unlike many TV stations and newspapers—does not monitor candidates' political ads for veracity.

A TIME analysis of publicly available Facebook data, which included the cataloging of hundreds of distinct messages, shows how Trump is using social media to supercharge his push-back against impeachment and add to his considerable \$150 million war chest. Ads that many Americans would otherwise never see have been tested and tailored to solicit responses from older voters, deploying Trump's distinctive use of capital letters and words like *scam* and *witch hunt*.

Pelosi's announcement came on a Tuesday. By the end of that week, the campaign had spent more on Facebook ads than in any week since Facebook began reporting political ad spending in May 2018, topping both the aftermath of special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation and the massive push in the run-up to the 2018 midterm elections, according to TIME's analysis. In the weeks since, the Trump campaign has paid Facebook more than \$5.4 million for ad placements, generating

well over 100 million appearances on user feeds.

The spending may be paying for itself. Within 72 hours of Pelosi's announcement, the campaign had raised \$15 million in small-dollar donations. On a typical day, it raises approximately half a million in small-dollar donations—those of \$200 or under. On Oct. 31, the day the House voted to approve rules for the impeachment inquiry, the campaign raised more than \$3 million, around six times the norm, a senior campaign official tells TIME.

Which means that even as White House lawyers have been outwardly blocking access to documents and officials and dismissing the House's work as illegitimate, the Trump campaign has embraced impeachment as a means of rallying support and donations in an extraordinarily aggressive Facebook campaign that sometimes includes Instagram—which is owned by Facebook—and that is augmented by spending on Google and other digital platforms. TIME's analysis shows that about two-thirds of the spending goes to ads that either explicitly mention impeachment or unambiguously allude to the House investigation.

The sheer volume of the Trump campaign's presence on social media, and the money behind it, means that for a substantial number of Americans who thumb through Facebook for personal and national news, the campaign stands a good chance of actually delivering its version of events, no matter the reality. "The campaign has done a good job of telling us what the news is in case we don't see it on Fox," Huber says.

That raises issues. Trump is using the fallout from impeachment to reach more voters and donors on a platform that's come under fire for being a tool of election meddling, especially after Russia used Facebook and other social-media platforms to stir up animosity, spread falsehoods and organize real-life protests against Hillary Clinton

in 2016. A Facebook spokesperson did not want to comment in depth but noted that Democratic candidates have also invested heavily in advertising on the platform. Facebook advertising data shows Trump has spent \$16.2 million on Facebook so far this year. That compares with \$14.2 million spent by Tom

Steyer, \$5.9 million by Pete Buttigieg, \$4.9 million by Elizabeth Warren, \$4.8 million by Bernie Sanders and \$3.1 million by Joe Biden.

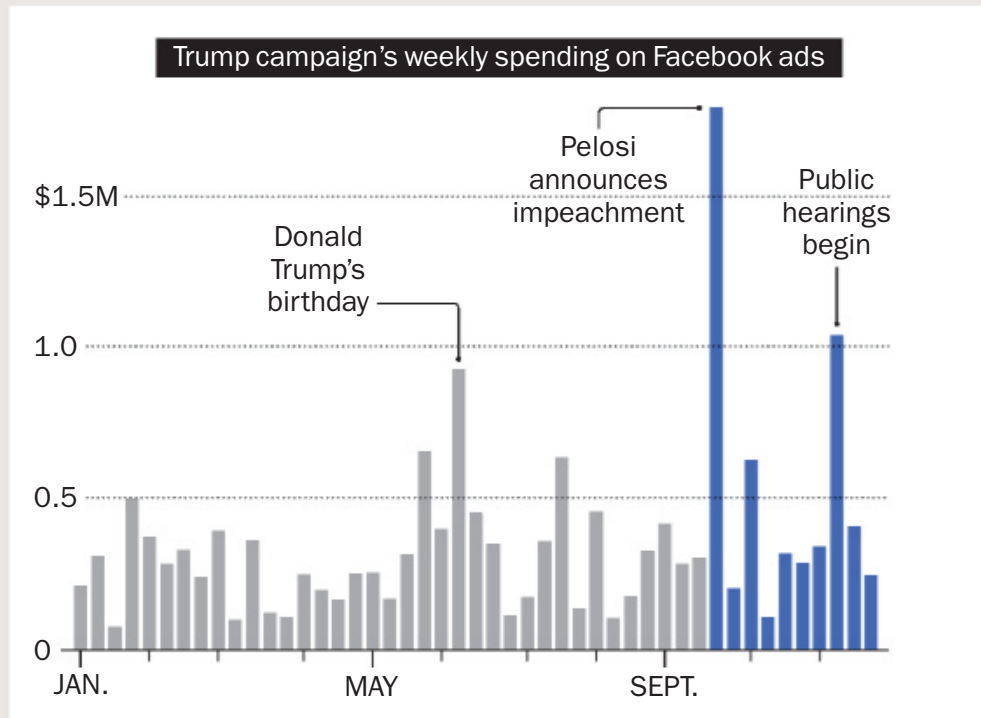
From the White House, Jared Kushner has been convening meetings to coordinate the messaging on impeachment between the White House, the campaign and Congress. A tight group made up of Kushner, Parscale, Republican National Committee chair Ronna McDaniel and House minority

**'I'm not saying what he did was right. I just don't think it's impeachable.'**

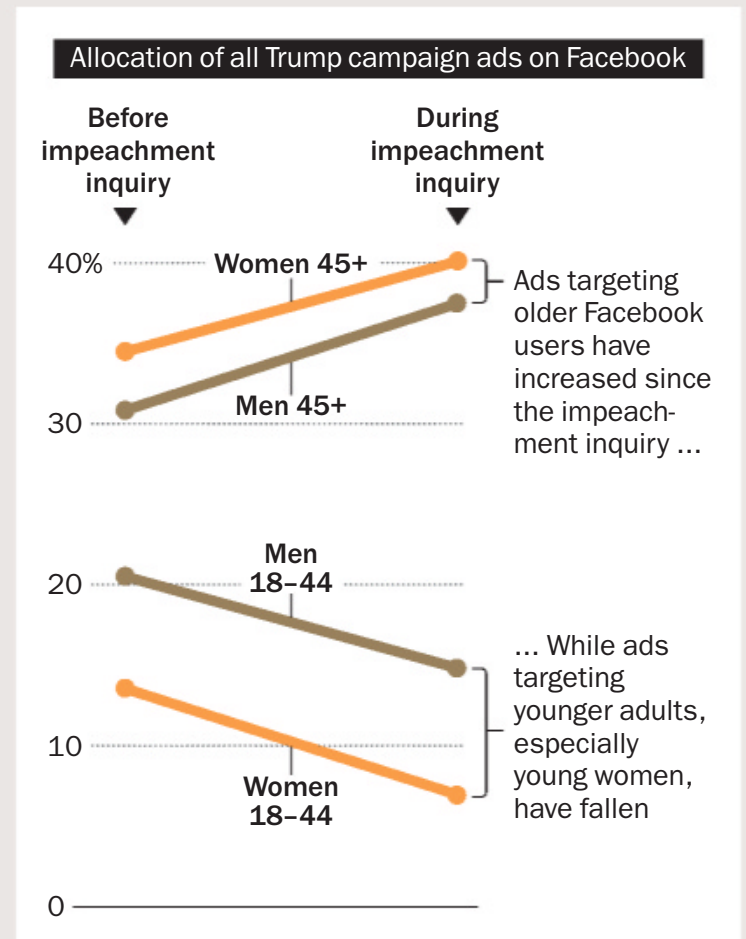


## Anatomy of an ad blitz

Since the impeachment investigation was announced, the Trump campaign has ramped up spending on Facebook ads targeting voters seen as key to the President's re-election bid:



SOURCE: TIME CALCULATIONS BASED ON THE FACEBOOK AD LIBRARY



leader Kevin McCarthy have decided to try to play impeachment to Trump's advantage, launching a campaign to stonewall Congress and to paint the process as partisan and unfair to Trump—and to voters. They believe impeachment helps the GOP's chances of winning back the House by putting the squeeze on Democrats who won in the 31 districts that went for Trump in 2016, says a senior Trump aide. "When this first happened, people were running around with their hair on fire saying, 'He's gonna be impeached!'" the aide says. "They can be tough, but we can be tougher. They keep making up their own rules because Trump is not natural to Washington. And then when we break the rules back, they get incensed by it."

That's not to say Trump wasn't furious he was being impeached. Trump hates having the *I* word attached to his legacy. But since it has become all but inevitable that the House will vote to impeach him, even if the GOP-controlled Senate keeps him in office, his campaign has kicked into gear to use the issue. When impeachment news is "whipped up into a frenzy," campaign officials see a dramatic spike in small-dollar donations, in people clicking on Trump ads, and in voter data collected, the campaign's director of communications Tim Murtaugh tells TIME. "Every time this happens, the President's campaign gets bigger and stronger," Murtaugh claims.

National polls don't quite back that up, and Democrats have gambled that a high-wattage impeachment trial in the Senate will dampen enthusiasm for the President, ramp up Democratic voter turnout in 2020 and damage Trump's re-election chances.

Across the country, public support for impeachment is about 5 points higher than opposition in most polls. If anything, polls indicate Republicans and Democrats have dug deeper into a stalemate over impeachment. Following a small dip after the impeachment investigation began in late September, Trump's job approval has remained virtually unchanged since summer. Gallup polling in the first two weeks of November found that 43% of Americans approve of Trump, identical to his standing before Pelosi's announcement.

When Trump took the stage in Sunrise, he did not avoid the topic. He accused "the radical-left Democrats" of being "maniacs" pushing "deranged impeachment" and "trying to rip our nation apart." He said his support is going up because "people don't like watching a scam." Then Trump reached for a line campaign officials believe will take the Democrats' momentum on impeachment and turn it in Trump's favor. "The failed Washington establishment," he said, "is trying to stop me because I'm fighting for you."

**TRUMP'S WEAPONIZING** of social media is well known. But interviews with senior Trump campaign staff and TIME's analysis of more than 325,000 Facebook ad buys lifts the veil on just how Trump has used that weapon since impeachment kicked off. The first wave came during the 28 minutes after Pelosi stepped out of her office in the Capitol and stated that the House would pursue its authority of "the utmost gravity: approval of articles of impeachment." The time was 5:04 p.m. Four minutes later, shortly after Pelosi had left the podium, Trump responded



on Twitter, calling it “Witch Hunt garbage.”

And less than 30 seconds after that tweet, the President’s re-election campaign unleashed a flood of paid Facebook advertising with a defiant message: “The ONLY thing stopping Democrats from carrying out their impeachment WITCH HUNT is Patriotic Americans standing with President Trump.”

Over the course of 20 minutes, the campaign spent an estimated \$100,000 to target the ad to an estimated 2 million Facebook accounts, hitting every state but weighting the target audience more heavily than usual toward the 45-and-over crowd—the group that according to 2016 exit polls was more likely to support Trump than Clinton. Above photos or videos depicting Trump or his Democratic rivals, viewers were encouraged, in all caps, to DONATE TO THE OFFICIAL IMPEACHMENT DEFENSE FUND NOW!, which, if clicked, led to a generic campaign-donation page.

Three days later, the Democratic committees charged with the impeachment investigation issued their first subpoena of the inquiry to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who has yet to respond. By that morning, Sept. 27, the campaign had purchased roughly \$1.3 million in ads to be displayed at least 15 million times and was well on its way to outpacing the previous most-expensive week in the past 18 months, when it carpeted Facebook with ads supporting Republicans in the midterm elections. (Weekly figures may grow higher because daily reported expenditures tend to lag in reporting.)

The vast majority of ads mimic, to an almost uncanny degree, the President’s distinct wordsmithing on Twitter, down to the frequent capitalization of words or sentences, the vitriol and the uncharitable nicknames for political foes. Beginning on Nov. 13, the first day of open hearings in the investigation, the campaign unleashed a set of ads stating, “The Impeachment Scam hearings begin today! This is a complete Fake Hearing to interview Never Trumpers and a Pelosi-Schiff SCAM against the Republican Party and me.”

When a user shares an ad, it still appears as Trump-sponsored content on the original user’s feed, but not on the feed of the Facebook friend viewing the shared post. And unlike a campaign designed by an ad agency, these messages are cheap to produce. All you need is a message, some visuals and a call to action.

The messages evolve in almost Darwinian fashion as the campaign field-tests them to see which grab voters. “They’re always trying variations of ads, text, pictures, they test everything,” a campaign official said. “They test what color of the donate button works best.”

Just after Pelosi’s announcement, for example, there were two versions of what was otherwise the same fundraising message, nearly word for word. Each stated, “The ONLY thing stopping Democrats from carrying out their



## Tracking the barrage

Minutes after the House Speaker launched the impeachment inquiry, Trump’s campaign began making large ad buys on Facebook

**Sept. 24**

**5:04 p.m.**

Nancy Pelosi formally announces the House will pursue articles of impeachment.

**3.5 min. later**

Trump tweets in response: “Witch Hunt garbage.”

**23 sec. later**

Trump campaign opens Facebook ad blitz, unleashing a flood of advertising with the message: “The ONLY thing stopping Democrats from carrying out their impeachment WITCH HUNT is Patriotic Americans standing with President Trump.”

**‘I think that the media doesn’t fully appreciate the power of the Facebook feed.’**

impeachment WITCH HUNT is Patriotic Americans standing with President Trump,” but one kind suggested a \$45 donation and the other did not.

Each was sent to about 80 different groups. Some were small, targeted ad buys in batches of less than

\$100. Others were big-ticket purchases that reached hundreds of thousands of users and cost at least \$10,000. Both kinds of ads continue to appear, but the one suggesting a \$45 donation has been promoted more aggressively. Campaign staff test and write Facebook and other social-media messaging from a warren of cubicles

on the 14th floor of an Arlington, Va., office building and have field-tested several hundred messages since Pelosi’s announcement.

Social-media companies survive on their ability to allow advertisers to microtarget groups with extraordinary specificity. That’s particularly true on





**Sept. 27**

**20 min. later**

Campaign has spent an estimated \$100,000 targeting 2 million Facebook users across the country.

**4:00 p.m.**

Pompeo is first Administration official to be subpoenaed since the announcement. By 5 p.m., 72 hours after the announcement, the campaign has spent about \$1.4 million in ads on Facebook, to be displayed at least 16 million times.

platforms like Facebook, where many users volunteer information about everything from their age and marital status to their interests, hobbies and opinions. In a recent *Washington Post* op-ed, Ellen L. Weintraub, the chair of the Federal Election Commission, warned that the ability to home in on a target audience in such detail lets political campaigns “single out susceptible groups and direct political misinformation to them with little accountability, because the public at large never sees the ad.” In March, Facebook addressed some of these concerns with its expanded Ad Library Report, where anyone—including those who do not have Facebook accounts—can browse ads about any topic and see the aggregate spending over time by those who pay for them. For an individual ad campaign, the site reports the percentage of the ad’s audience in each state, as well as their age ranges and genders. The Ad Library Report provides a range of how much each ad campaign costs and how many times the ad appeared in user feeds, as well as daily breakdowns of a campaign’s spending on

Facebook ads. From Nov. 1 to Dec. 1, the Trump campaign spent \$1.97 million on Facebook ads, the report says. By comparing those spending patterns to the appearance of ads, TIME was able to confidently estimate how much the campaign spent for any ad blast.

TIME analyzed hundreds of digital campaign ads and found that nearly all of Trump’s Facebook messages about impeachment fit into three categories: “The Democrats Are Against You,” “The Democrats Are Against Me” and “The Democrats Are Against America.”

The same motifs repeat with such regularity that the messaging, all together, plays like 12-bar blues: three dominant chords on repeat, with the occasional substitution. “The Democrats Are Against You” ads frequently warn that Democrats are intent on “silencing” or “intimidating” Trump supporters. “The Democrats Are Against Me” ads are the most apocalyptic, saying things like “The future of American freedom rests on the shoulders of men and women willing to defend it from these hateful impeachment attacks.” “The Democrats Are Against America” messages are the most personal and frequently cite Democrats by name. For example: “We need to send a RESOUNDING message to the left that big-government socialists like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ilhan Omar don’t represent the views of the American people!” A small percentage of ads propagate widely debunked stories about collusion between then Vice President Joe Biden and the Ukrainian government, with messages like “Joe Biden boasted that as vice president he threatened to withhold \$1 billion in foreign aid from Ukraine unless they fired the prosecutor looking into a lucrative contract held by his son, Hunter Biden. LEARN THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT DEMOCRATS!”

With the political trenches getting deeper, the campaign’s social-media blitz alone is unlikely to persuade new voters to cross over to Trump. And there is probably nothing the Democrats could uncover that would change

Diane Edwards’ mind about voting again for Trump. Edwards, a retired hairdresser who lives in rural Coin, Iowa, is “sick off all this impeachment crap,” adding, “Our country elected him. Everybody has faults, but I think overall he’s doing a good job.”

“It actually makes me support him more. I don’t like what they are doing to him,” says Jennifer Csaszar, 49, who attended Trump’s recent Florida rally from nearby Boca Raton with a friend. “I want to know what the Bidens did.”

When Democrats first announced the inquiry, they knew amassing bipartisan support would be a long shot. But they held out slight hope that if irrefutable evidence emerged showing the President dangled foreign assistance to the new Ukrainian government as leverage for an investigation into Biden and his family, some Republicans would deem it impeachable. That hasn’t happened.

Consider Carol and Rodney Smith, of Thomasville, N.C. Carol has been glued to the impeachment hearings and screams a lot at the television, she says, sitting with her husband Rodney at a Winston-Salem chicken-stew Republican fundraiser in late November. “The Democrats are trying to crucify him,” Carol says, adding that she doesn’t think Trump’s done “anything that former Presidents haven’t done at some point in time.” Rodney, a pastor at a Baptist church who doesn’t affiliate with a political party, also doesn’t think Trump’s actions justify removing him from office. “I’m not saying what he did was right. I just don’t think it’s impeachable.”



The entire impeachment exercise “has pushed people into their corners, and now you’ve got the jerseys on,” says David Kochel, a Republican strategist. “Republicans are putting on the red jersey, Democrats are putting on the blue jersey, and it’s kind of a polarizing time.” Once the majority-Democratic House votes to impeach Trump—which is likely—it will be up to the Senate to hold a trial and vote on whether he should be removed. The trial is likely to begin in January.

But Trump is resoundingly popular among Republicans, and it is this core strength of support that props up the Republican firewall in the Senate—making it politically risky for any Senator to come out against Trump. Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, one of the sharpest tacticians in the Republican Party’s history, has told his conference to pick one consistent reason to oppose impeachment—be it over Democrats’ motives, legislative process or judicial fairness—and stick with it. In poll after poll, GOP voters have rejected impeachment, and McConnell’s insiders says that as long as that number remains above 85%, Republicans’ majority of 53 seats can be preserved—making it very unlikely Trump will be removed from office.

“Abandoning the President is political suicide,” says Matt Beynon, a Republican strategist and alumnus of Rick Santorum’s bids for the White House. “You’re going to get tied to the President no matter what. You’re on the ticket with him. If you abandon him, all you’re going to do is infuriate the base. And that’s a very powerful base.”

There’s even a growing feeling inside Trump’s inner circle that he may emerge from the impeachment process stronger, assuming the GOP firewall in the Senate does not crack and there are no new revelations. (Senate Republicans backed Richard Nixon until audiotapes showed he knew early on about the break-in at the Democratic National Committee office at the Watergate.) Coming out the other side, his aides argue, would further strengthen support among Trump’s base and weaken future attempts to undermine him.

At the beginning of Trump’s rally in Sunrise, pastor Mario Bramnick delivered a prayer that echoed the campaign’s strategy to use impeachment as a weapon, likening it to a “demonic storm” that was “coming to try to destroy our nation.” “That which the enemy has designed against our President—and to stop God’s plan for our nation through him—must cease and desist,” Bramnick, who was introduced as a member of the advisory board of Latinos for Trump, told the thousands of Trump supporters, many with their heads bowed. “I declare what the enemy meant for evil, God turn around for good.” —*With reporting by* ALANA ABRAMSON *and* PHILIP ELLIOTT/WASHINGTON *and* LISSANDRA VILLA/CLARINDA, IOWA

# COMMA IN C





# UNDER HAOS

The generals who once filled President Trump's Cabinet are all gone.

What does it mean for U.S. foreign policy?

By Peter Bergen

EARLY IN HIS PRESIDENCY, IN MID-APRIL 2017, DONALD TRUMP AND his top national-security officials gathered in the Oval Office for a briefing on North Korea. Trump sat behind his massive Resolute desk as officials crowded in around him. The briefing consisted largely of highly classified images of North Korea's nuclear facilities and military sites. The briefers knew Trump was more a visual learner than a briefing-book kind of guy, so the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency had made a three-dimensional model of a secret North Korean facility that they brought to the Oval Office.

Trump was also shown a well-known satellite image of North Korea at night. On North Korea's northern border was China awash in pinpricks of light, while to the south was South Korea also all lit up at night. Between China and South Korea was an almost entirely dark North Korea with only a tiny, faint light emanating from its capital, Pyongyang. The image eloquently told the story of the almost total failure of the North Korean economy.

Trump focused on the image of South Korea and its capital, Seoul. The distance from the North Korean border to Seoul was only 15 miles.

Trump remarked, "Why is Seoul so close to the North Korean border?"

The President had been regularly briefed that North Korea possessed vast artillery batteries that, in the event of war, could kill millions in Seoul. The photo seemed to bring the briefings home.

"They have to move," he said, referring to the inhabitants of Seoul.

The officials in the Oval Office weren't sure if Trump was joking. Trump repeated, "They have to move!" Seoul, with a population of 10 million, has roughly as many residents as Sweden. Was the President seriously suggesting 10 million people needed to leave their homes in Seoul and move elsewhere? No one knew what to say.

In this previously unreported episode, Trump demonstrated what his supporters admired so much about him: his unorthodox thinking. To his critics this was the kind of idea that underlined just how ignorant and impetuous the President was.

**TRUMP IS THE FIRST AMERICAN PRESIDENT** not to have previously served in public office or in uniform, so when he first assumed the presidency he needed the cover of senior officers around him with plenty of fruit salad (as medals are jokingly called) on their chests. No modern President has appointed so many generals to Cabinet posts: retired general Jim Mattis as Secretary of Defense, retired general John Kelly first as Secretary of Homeland Security and later as chief of staff, and retired Army lieutenant general Michael Flynn as National Security Adviser, who was then replaced in that role by Lieut. General H.R. McMaster.

At first Trump reveled in the generals on his team, especially the "killers." Trump respected the raw power embodied by the U.S. military, and he needed Cabinet officials around him who understood how the levers of national-security power actually worked and who had experience in America's long-running wars on terrorism.

In the beginning Trump's alliance with the generals worked well, and





they guided him to some sensible decisions. Trump's first inclination was to pull out all the American troops in Afghanistan, but the generals led by McMaster made the case that a precipitous withdrawal would create a vacuum that terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS would exploit. In August 2017 Trump announced an open-ended commitment to Afghanistan as well as a small surge of troops in order to combat the resurgent Taliban.

For a year and a half until May 2018, the generals—along with another member of the so-called axis of adults, then Secretary of State Rex Tillerson—were able to persuade Trump not to scrap the Iran nuclear deal. The International Atomic Energy Agency had repeatedly certified that Iran was sticking to the agreement and wasn't developing nuclear weapons. Mattis wanted to stay in the Iran deal not only because it was working but also because it had been negotiated by the U.S. together with close American allies—the British, French and Germans. In Mattis' view, if the U.S. had made an agreement, you should stick to it. Otherwise, you risked eroding what America's word meant. Mattis lost that fight when Trump announced that he was pulling out of the nuclear deal.

Even on Russia, despite Trump's repeated kowtowing to Russian President Vladimir Putin, Trump's Administration actually followed a tough line at times—when, for instance, the U.S. expelled 60 Russian diplomats in March 2018 after Russian intelligence's attempt to assassinate a former Russian spy in the United Kingdom using a nerve agent.

But Trump's romance with his generals eventually turned disastrously sour. The differences between Trump and U.S. military leaders were partly stylistic: Trump's lack of decorum and rudeness are certainly at odds with the military's honor-based values. But the differences were also about policy; Pentagon officials want to sustain overseas military commitments, which they see as vital to securing world order, whether that is to defeat ISIS, contain a nuclear-armed North Korea or prevent Afghanistan from reverting to control by the Taliban. Trump believes that he was elected to end foreign entanglements and that alliances like NATO are financially ripping off the U.S. The generals knew that NATO allies had fought shoulder to shoulder with them in Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks.

Trump fixated on getting close NATO allies like Germany to “pay up” even when they didn't owe any money. He found it particularly irksome that while the Germans had the second largest economy in the alliance, they ponied up only around 1% of their GDP on defense while the U.S. spent around 4%. On March 17, 2017, German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrived in Washington on her first official visit to President Trump. Trump interpreted the Germans' underspending on defense as if he were a landlord collecting overdue rent, which drove the Germans nuts. Trump's staff produced a chart showing that Germany was purportedly \$600 billion in arrears. Trump waved the “invoice” at Merkel, who told Trump, “Don't you understand this is not real?” This was the kind of performance by the President that the generals found deeply puzzling.

And then there was the manner in which Trump conducted himself personally. In an astonishing display of insensitivity, during a 2017 meeting about how to best prosecute the Afghan war, Trump said in Kelly's presence that the young American soldiers who had died in Afghanistan had died for a worthless cause. Trump said, “We got our boys who are over there being blown up every day for what? For nothing. Guys are dying for nothing. There's nothing worth dying for in that country.” Kelly had lost a son

**Trump was now surrounded with yes-men and was running his Cabinet as he had run his real estate company**

in Afghanistan, 29-year-old Marine First Lieutenant Robert Kelly. Trump either didn't know or didn't care.

Trump set records for the level of turnover at the White House and in his Cabinet. Flynn was fired within a month of Trump's assuming office for lying to Vice President Mike Pence. McMaster, who never really connected with Trump, was pushed out after just over a year as National Security Adviser. Kelly left when he was no longer on speaking terms with the President, which made his job as chief of staff untenable. Mattis resigned after two years because of Trump's cavalier treatment of American allies.

Trump's split with Mattis was a long time coming; they had fundamental policy differences that began to add up over time. The Saudi-led blockade of neighboring Qatar in June 2017 was one of the first. As the former Central Command commander, Mattis knew that in many ways the most important American base overseas was Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, as this was where the wars against ISIS and the Taliban were coordinated. Yet initially Trump heartily endorsed the blockade because of his close alignment with the Saudis.

White House officials became increasingly frustrated with what they believed to be Mattis' efforts not to provide a range of military options to the President, in particular for any kind of potential showdown with Iran. When it came to Iran, Mattis simply ignored the President's directive to develop military options.







President Trump during a meeting with U.S. military leaders in 2018

Similarly, when Vice President Pence and McMaster planned for a war game at Camp David in the fall of 2017 so they could better understand the military options the U.S. had in North Korea, Mattis never sent any military planners for the war game and so the session never happened, an episode recounted here for the first time.

Mattis believed that at any moment the President could do something irrational, so he had to be the force for reason. Mattis often said, “We have to make sure reason trumps impulse.” White House officials realized that Mattis believed Trump was a loose cannon and didn’t want to enable any bad decisions by providing military options that Trump could seize upon. White House officials started to refer to “Mad Dog” Mattis as “Little Baby Kitten” Mattis.

**BY THE END OF 2018** the axis of adults—Kelly, Mattis, McMaster and Tillerson—had all departed.

Kelly saw his tenure in the White

House as best measured by what he had prevented Trump from doing—for instance, pulling out of Afghanistan, as was the President’s first instinct; withdrawing from NATO; or pulling American forces out of South Korea, according to an interview he gave the *Los Angeles Times*.

Trump could change his mind on a dime about any issue, something more likely to happen after the departures of the axis of adults. This was demonstrated by his abrupt decision to pull U.S. forces out of Syria in December 2018. Trump changed his mind on Syria, opting to leave a residual force there, then changed his mind again, announcing a total withdrawal in October. He then re-reversed himself by leaving several hundred soldiers in Syria. On Iran, he whipsawed between offering talks with the Iranian regime and authorizing a military strike against Iranian military targets, which he then called off.

The consistent inconsistency left both allies and enemies puzzled about his intentions. If geopolitics were as relatively simple as a Manhattan real estate deal, a whiplash strategy might have been effective. Instead, over time, America’s enemies such as the Iranians, North Koreans and Russians pegged Trump as an inconsistent bully whose bark was far worse than his bite, and adjusted their policies accordingly. North Korea started testing ballistic missiles again and continued nuclear-weapons production, while Iran started enriching uranium beyond the limits of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, and Russia persisted in its large-scale information operations against the U.S.

With the departures of the generals, the world got to see Trump increasingly unplugged. Meetings between Trump and Kim Jong Un in Vietnam and at the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea yielded no tangible results. Newly imposed sanctions on the Iranians certainly had begun to bite, but Iran also restarted its uranium-enrichment program. The Trump Administration announced a partial withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and conducted peace talks with the Taliban with no input

from the Afghan government. But then, on Sept. 7, 2019, Trump surprised even his close advisers with a tweet that “the major Taliban leaders and, separately, the President of Afghanistan, were going to secretly meet with me at Camp David on Sunday.” Trump wrote that he had “cancelled the meeting and called off peace negotiations,” because the Taliban had “admitted to an attack in Kabul that killed one of our great soldiers.” The Afghan war grinds on with the Taliban more empowered and the Afghan government weaker.

Trump was now surrounded with yes-men and was running his Cabinet as he had run his real estate company, as a one-man show. The danger of having Trump surrounded by a team of acolytes was underscored by what became potentially the greatest threat to his presidency—the call he made on July 25, 2019, to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, when Trump asked the Ukrainians to investigate Joe Biden as well as his son Hunter. Kelly says he warned Trump during his final days as his chief of staff not to hire a “yes-man” to replace him, saying he risked being impeached if he did.

The generals who had once guided his national-security policies were all now long gone from his Administration. What remained was a chief executive who thrilled to the ceremonial aspects of being Commander in Chief but was generally reluctant to send American forces into harm’s way, inconsistent in his strategy and given to second-guessing the military (as he did in issuing pardons to convicted soldiers). What still isn’t clear is how the mercurial President might react to a genuine crisis.

Trump did score a real win in October when he authorized the operation in Syria in which the leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, died. There were significant risks, because U.S. Special Operation forces deployed for the operation had to fly across “denied” Syrian airspace controlled by the Russians, who have sophisticated air-defense capabilities. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Mark Milley, called his Russian counterpart to warn him that the U.S. would be conducting an operation in his airspace. After al-Baghdadi blew himself up with a suicide vest, Trump held a press conference saying the ISIS leader had “died like a dog.” Trump used these words deliberately as a message to young men who might be contemplating joining ISIS. He told his advisers, “I don’t need people to walk back what I said.”

The teenager who had reveled in his time at the New York Military Academy boarding school—“I felt like I was in the military in a true sense”—was now finally his own general.

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*Bergen is a CNN analyst. His new book, Trump and His Generals: The Cost of Chaos, from which this article is adapted, will be published by Penguin Press on Dec. 10*



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*Antonio Banderas  
reaches new heights  
in Pedro Almodóvar's  
Pain & Glory*

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
BENJO ARWAS

THE 2019

# Best of Culture

MOVIES • TELEVISION • MUSIC • THEATER • PODCASTS



# Top 10 Movies

BY STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

## 1. *Pain & Glory*

In any life, there's only so much time to do all we want to do. In Pedro Almodóvar's *Pain & Glory*, **Antonio Banderas** (*previous page*) gives the performance of a lifetime as 60-ish filmmaker Salvador Mallo—a stand-in, more or less, for Almodóvar himself—who's in so much physical pain that he may never work again. Worse yet, he may not care; instead of life after death, he's settling for death before death, a premature leave-taking that's a betrayal not just of his gifts but also of the time on earth any of us is given. Then a lost love reappears, and other bits of his past—particularly recollections of his mother, played as a young woman by a radiant Penélope Cruz—float into view, demanding to be explored through his art. *Pain & Glory* may be Almodóvar's most resplendent and moving film, a panorama of paint-box colors and even more intense emotions, and a hymn to the whatever it is that keeps any of us going, in the years, months or days before our bodies betray us.

## 2. *The Irishman*

The world doesn't need another gangster movie, not even one from Martin Scorsese—or so you may have thought before *The Irishman*. Scorsese's 3½-hour saga is based on the story of Frank Sheeran (played, superbly, by Robert De Niro), a real-life low-level mobster who claims to have killed Jimmy Hoffa (a marvelous Al Pacino), the onetime Teamsters president who disappeared in 1975. For roughly its first two-thirds, *The Irishman* is hugely entertaining. Then it shifts into something far more complex. It's a melancholy Mob epic.

## 3. *Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood*

Quentin Tarantino concocts a fantasy in which Sharon Tate—the actor murdered by Manson family members in 1969—gets the much happier ending she deserves.

Margot Robbie plays Tate in a small but potent role; she's the patron spirit of a late-1960s Hollywood in which a has-been actor (Leonardo DiCaprio) and his stunt double and buddy (Brad Pitt) struggle to find their place. This is Tarantino's most affectionately detailed picture, filled with tenderness for a lost Hollywood, and a lost era of filmmaking.

## 4. *Marriage Story*

Adam Driver and Scarlett Johansson, both astonishing, star as a married couple in the midst of breaking up. To their horror, and ours, their at-first amicable split grows into a monster they had no idea they were capable of creating. This is Noah Baumbach's most emotionally ragged movie, an acknowledgment that compromises aren't nuisances that detract from life; they're the stuff it's built on.

## 5. *Little Women*

Greta Gerwig's verdantly alive adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's evergreen 150-year-old novel—starring Saoirse Ronan as the ambitious and vibrant Jo March—captures the book's spirit and heart. It also cuts to the reason Alcott's ideas still resonate: she knew how it felt to yearn for something more, even when you're not sure what that something more is.

## 6. *Parasite*

Korean director Bong Joon Ho's black comedy-thriller, about an impoverished family who scheme their way into an upper-crust household, artfully explores resentment between the haves and the have-nots. Even more striking is its deep humanity: both the scammers and the scammed earn our sympathy. *Parasite* is today's answer to filmmaker Jean Renoir's famous line “The awful thing about life is this: everyone has their reasons.”

## 7. *Knives Out*

Writer-director Rian Johnson's ensemble whodunit—about a family fighting over the will of an eccentric mystery writer—is so beautifully made that it skims by in a flash. Ana de Armas gives a wonderful performance as the young woman, a nurse who also happens to be an immigrant, at the heart of the intrigue. This gorgeously layered film is great fun to watch, but it's also perfectly placed in our era. We're killing one another, but with something that's the opposite of kindness.

*Jamie Lee Curtis, Daniel Craig, Lakeith Stanfield and Ana de Armas star in Johnson's dazzling Knives Out*

## 8. *Dolemite Is My Name*

Eddie Murphy stars as Rudy Ray Moore, the real-life performer who financed and starred in an ultra-low-budget 1975 movie—featuring a flashy hustler named Dolemite—that became both a hit and the stuff of legend. Directed by Craig Brewer, this movie is about ambition taking flight against all odds. It's also pure joy, and as Dolemite himself would tell you, you never kick that out of bed.

## 9. *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*

Marielle Heller's beautifully made film isn't a biopic of celebrated children's-TV host Fred Rogers. Instead, it shows his ideas in practice, telling the story of an unlikely friendship between Mr. Rogers (Tom Hanks) and a sour journalist (Matthew Rhys) riven with anger issues. Rogers was all about kindness, but Heller's movie highlights another of his tenets: we have to give ourselves permission to feel everything in order to make peace with the things that threaten to tear us apart.

## 10. *Hustlers*

Two exotic dancers (Constance Wu and Jennifer Lopez), both single mothers needing to provide for their families after the 2008 crash, hatch a highly illegal scheme to relieve clueless Wall Streeters of their money. Director Lorene Scafaria's *Hustlers* is lively and funny, as well as a reminder that it's often women—and their children—who suffer most when an economic system driven largely by men collapses. When the going gets tough, the tough ... hustle.





# Top 10 Performances

BY STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

## 1. Antonio Banderas

### *Pain & Glory*

Banderas has been appearing in Pedro Almodóvar's films since the early days of his career. How can so many years have passed? In *Pain & Glory*, he gives an aching, unguarded performance as a successful filmmaker nearing the tail end of his career, graying and anxious and hampered by severe pain. Banderas gives us a glimpse into what can happen to any of us as we age. He also pays a blood-brothers tribute to Almodóvar, a man who has brought great joy and a freeing sense of abandon to his audience, making us feel young even if we're not.

## 2. Jennifer Lopez

### *Hustlers*

We spend a great deal of time praising actors we think of as great, but we don't always know what to do with the charming ones. In *Hustlers*, as an exotic dancer who hatches an illegal scheme to extract money from horny Wall Street dudes' wallets, Lopez (right) is both charming and great—as if two translucent hues spontaneously overlapped to make a new color.

## 3. Adam Driver

### *Marriage Story*

In this portrait of a brutal divorce, there's a sequence in which Driver's Charlie hurls cruel words at his

soon-to-be-ex-wife, played by Scarlett Johansson. And then, horrified, he sinks to the floor, folding his mighty frame into the tiniest jackknife. With that single, compact movement, Driver makes us feel the weight of living with every heedless thing we've ever said or done.

## 4. Taylor Russell

### *Waves*

Russell's Emily—the kid sister of a star athlete gone wrong—is the first character we see in Trey Edward Shults' lacerating family drama, *Waves*. Then we nearly forget about her, until she re-emerges in the movie's superb second half. Russell's performance is like a rush of wind on a dry, hot day, the blessing you didn't know you needed.

## 5. Matthias Schoenaerts

### *The Mustang*

Schoenaerts, one of our finest and perhaps most underappreciated actors, plays a closed-off prison inmate who's redeemed by training a wild horse. With just a glance, he shows us a lifetime's storehouse of resentment, or deep-rooted wariness giving way to trust—and all opposite an equine co-star whose soulful eyes might have otherwise stolen the show.

## 6. Renée Zellweger

### *Judy*

Judy Garland, beyond great and also too much, is the eclipse you can't help looking at. In *Judy*, Zellweger is the piece of glass that allows you to gaze at her directly, to see her in new ways but also to fine-tune all that you already know. And she sings too. It's a wonderful performance, as rich and alluring as a length of golden brocade, but one with appropriately ragged edges.



## 7. Joe Pesci

### *The Irishman*

Pesci often plays the hotheaded clown, but he goes much deeper as Mob boss Russell Bufalino in *The Irishman*. Pesci's Russell, crumpled and bitter, longs for tenderness even as he shuts it out. It's as if he's willed the deep creases on his face into being, the better to obscure what's going on behind his eyes—he's an apple-head doll of rage. And still, he breaks us.

## 8. Margot Robbie

### *Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood*

In this ode to the Hollywood that was, Robbie plays a dream version of murdered actor Sharon Tate, and she's the movie's lifeblood—not an elusive vision projected on a screen but a young woman we're granted the pleasure of knowing. It's she who's living—we, the unlucky ones, are only dreaming her.

## 9. Eddie Murphy

### *Dolemite Is My Name*

Murphy brings the spirit of blaxploitation underdog Rudy Ray Moore to life, with tell-it-like-it-is radiance. His timing is, as always, cobra-strike precise; his smile is both conspiratorial and expansive. And, as an aging actor grabbing at what he knows is his last chance, he's deeply moving.

## 10. Kristen Stewart

### *Seberg*

Stewart is a marvel as Jean Seberg, the American-born actor who became a huge French star—and whose death may have been hastened by the FBI's aggressive hounding of her in the late 1960s and early '70s. Opening herself up to this sad, lost woman, Stewart allows Seberg's spirit to rush in, filling every channel and vein. Her Seberg is not just a tragic figure but a woman full of life, restored to us for a few precious hours.

PHOTOGRAPH BY NATALIA MANTINI







# Top 10 TV Shows

BY JUDY BERMAN

## 1. *Fleabag*

In 2016, this black comedy about a young woman caught in a self-destructive spiral launched creator-star Phoebe Waller-Bridge to fame. But it matured in the three years between seasons, giving its lead an impossible love story. By allowing its antihero a measure of grace without sacrificing audacity, Waller-Bridge conjured a vision of redemption that has eluded other millennial TV creators—and closed the decade with its single best season of comedy. (Amazon)

## 2. *Russian Doll*

Somehow, a show from **Natasha Lyonne** (opposite), Amy Poehler and Leslye Headland managed to surpass even the stratospheric expectations of those women's fans. Built like, yes, a nesting doll, the story opens with Lyonne's New York cynic Nadia dying on her birthday. A moment later, she's back at the party where she started the night, condemned to repeat the cycle of death and rebirth until she levels up in self-knowledge. Stir in a warm, wry tone, a dose of downtown grit and a dash of karmic justice, and you've got the year's best new series. (Netflix)

*In its second season, HBO's **Succession** has become one of TV's must-watch shows*

## 3. *Succession*

As right-wing tycoons and their families run amok in real life, isn't it odd to savor a show about the nightmare offspring of a Murdoch-like media titan? A rational argument for adoring *Succession* might point to the crude poetry of its dialogue, the fearlessness of its cast or this season's knife-twisting satire of digital media. But on a primal level, what a thrill it is to see our worst assumptions about people who thirst for money and power confirmed. (HBO)

## 4. *Vida*

*Vida* got off to a promising start. Mishel Prada and Melissa Barrera shone as Latinx sisters who come home to L.A. after their mom's death, only to learn how much they didn't know about her. But Season 2 is a revelation, testing their tense bond as the family's bar becomes a target of antigentrification activists. Led by creator Tanya Saracho, *Vida* brings lived-in nuance to issues like class, colorism and desire, yielding a uniquely smart and sexy show. (Starz)

## 5. *Lodge 49*

The shaggy saga of a man (Wyatt Russell's Dud) flailing after his father's death, *Lodge 49* blossomed in its first season into an allegory for contemporary isolation. Dud finds fellowship at the titular fraternal lodge, which in this year's second season travels to Mexico on a quest for its holy grail. Then, AMC canceled

the show. Streamers, if you're reading this: #SaveLodge49. (AMC)

## 6. *David Makes Man*

Tarell Alvin McCraney, who wrote the play that became *Moonlight*, created this lyrical drama about a smart, troubled 14-year-old (Akili McDowell) fighting to excel in school and avoid gangs. Though it shares themes—black boyhood, complicated mentors, queerness—with *Moonlight*, the show has a grander scope. More than a tale of genius and poverty battling for the soul of one extraordinary kid, it's a portrait of a community. (OWN)

## 7. *Undone*

*BoJack Horseman* alums masterminded this animated sci-fi drama about a disaffected young woman (Rosa Salazar) who narrowly survives a car crash. In hospital-bed visions, she reunites with her dead father (Bob Odenkirk) and embarks on a time-travel mission to preempt his murder. The mystery doubles as a mind-bending meditation on family, spirituality and consciousness unlike anything else on TV. (Amazon)

## 8. *Watchmen*

The classic 1980s comic gets a timely update, with creator Damon Lindelof setting his *Watchmen* in an alternate 2019 that pits masked vigilante Sister Night (Regina King, in the superhero role she deserves) against white-supremacist terrorists.

Callbacks to the book abound, but the show thrives on the confusion of our politically polarized present. (HBO)

## 9. *When They See Us*

Ava DuVernay brings her signature mix of righteous anger and optimism to this docudrama about the Central Park Five. In exposing how a broken justice system framed innocent teens of color for a heinous crime, she and her young cast create empathetic portraits of regular boys robbed of their childhoods. (Netflix)

## 10. *Back to Life*

Out on parole after spending half her life in jail for a crime she committed at 18, Miri (creator Daisy Haggard) moves back to her childhood hometown where everyone hates her for what she did. Weighing Miri's crime against the less extreme but more malicious transgressions of her neighbors, this sharp British traumaedy shows how much you can learn about a place from its scapegoats. (Showtime)

*King gives a standout performance on HBO's **Watchmen***







# Top 10 Albums

BY RAISA BRUNER AND ANDREW R. CHOW

## 1. FKA twigs *Magdalene*

Historically, Mary Magdalene is a conflicted character: vilified, sanctified, reduced to the contours of her femininity. On *Magdalene*, British artist **FKA twigs** (opposite) seeks to complicate that vision of womanhood with her own, broadening and intensifying her story and creatively blending ideas from hip-hop, R&B, industrial and choral music. Some moments are hauntingly tender, as on the delicate chorus of “Home With You”; that’s quickly offset by brutally distorted drums and FKA twigs’ intimate expressions of pain. Other moments are bombastic, with layers of electronic production and lyrics she drops as an angry rebuke, like on the arresting “Fallen Alien.” Rescue comes in the form of self-recognition. On “Mary Magdalene,” she makes it clear in an opening overture she lays down like a mantra: “A woman’s time to embrace she must put herself first.” Love matters, but survival—as women throughout history have learned—can be a solo endeavor.

## 2. Solange *When I Get Home*

You won’t find many conventional aspects of modern pop or R&B on Solange’s *When I Get Home*—there’s no vocal sheen, no overpowering drums, no slogans of empowerment. Instead, with airtight instrumental grooves and repeated vocal fragments, Solange conjures immersive trance states that become habitats for meditating, dancing and dreaming. *When I Get Home* may not have the urgent rhetoric about injustice that pervades her earlier work, but her iconoclastic, visionary aesthetic is radical on its own.

## 3. Big Thief *U.F.O.F.*

Death and disease pervade nearly every song of *U.F.O.F.*, the first of two records this

year from the Brooklyn indie rock band Big Thief. But the band doesn’t wallow: they instead find inspiration in both the tactile rush of the present and the allure of the unknown. Over rippling guitars, Adrienne Lenker sings of her own mortality with a startling optimism: “See my death become a trail/ And the trail leads to a flower.”

*Solange, left, and Eilish both released zeitgeist-defining albums in 2019*



## 4. Lana Del Rey *Norman F-cking Rockwell!*

On her sixth album, Lana Del Rey does what she’s been threatening to do since 2011’s surprise hit “Video Games”: she unleashes an American classic, with both throwback references and nods to the current culture. From her enchanting cover of Sublime’s “Doin’ Time” to her sweet “Love Song,” it’s easy to get lulled into a false sense of security by Del Rey’s dreamy aesthetic. But her songs are full of darkness, convoluted love and nihilistic disillusionment. The result is an album that’s uniquely suited for our moment—an apocalyptic lullaby.

## 5. Billy Woods and Kenny Segal *Hiding Places*

“This your land of plenty?” snarls the New York rapper Billy Woods on his collaborative album with the Los Angeles producer Kenny Segal. Over 12 songs, the pair challenges the rosy image set forth by American myths and politicians, instead vividly narrating from the country’s grimy crawl spaces.

## 6. Billie Eilish *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?*

Billie Eilish loves an eerie refrain: “I want to end me,” she says repeatedly on “Bury a Friend”; on the chart-topper “Bad Guy,” she insists, “I’m the bad guy—duh.” It’s this weirdness, delivered with total nonchalance, that’s made the California teen—who was first boosted to fame by a SoundCloud hit—a Gen Z icon. Singing delicately over creative production, Eilish strikes a chord with forward-thinking pop that mixes both vulnerability and swagger.

## 7. Bon Iver *i,i*

While Bon Iver used previous albums to explore new sonic spaces, *i,i* mostly draws

from these past adventures to create one spellbinding tapestry. There are lulling campfire songs and gritty rock grooves, frenetic jazz saxophones and menacing trap drums. At the center lies his pliant voice, which explodes in bursts of harmony before dropping down to whisper simple confessions: “I like you—and that ain’t nothing new.”

## 8. King Princess *Cheap Queen*

New York singer-songwriter King Princess, real name Mikaela Straus, is just 20. But her music sounds and feels like it belongs to an earlier era, with jazzy instincts and her silky-smoky voice. Straus openly embedded her sexuality in her music from the start, turning love songs like early viral hit “1950” into statements of queer identity. Yet she’s not constricted by either genre or self-definition, instead flirting throughout with production styles and sounds that break from tradition.

## 9. Joe Armon-Jones *Turn to Clear View*

London currently serves as home to a young, vital jazz scene, and the keyboardist Joe Armon-Jones sits close to its center. *Turn to Clear View* moves effortlessly between jazz, R&B, hip-hop and Afrobeat without diluting any of those art forms, proving the breadth and intensity of the music of the modern black diaspora.

## 10. James Blake *Assume Form*

On his fourth album, British R&B experimentalist James Blake doubles down on moody, simmering tracks sprinkled with the voices of high-impact collaborators. At turns edgy and haunting, then syrupy with romance, Blake uses his featured artists—including Travis Scott, André 3000 and Rosalía—to provide extra kick, turning songs like the echoing “Tell Them” into compelling duets rich with texture. It’s an album of love songs—the oldest subject in the book—but it’s filled with new sonic ideas.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CAMPBELL ADDY







# Top 10 Songs

BY RAISA BRUNER AND ANDREW R. CHOW

## 1. 'Old Town Road' Lil Nas X

"Old Town Road" contains many opposing truths. It's both underdog and behemoth, eye-rolling trivial and slyly progressive, radio-ready hit and oddball meme. It was this shape-shifting ability that made "Old Town Road" the ideal cultural artifact for 2019, in its many iterations and the conversations it inspired. Whether people went online to criticize it, dance to it or remix it, so many people interacted with the song in some way, continuously pouring fuel as it set record after record. And as Lil Nas X added to the fire by releasing a stream of remixes, the song became less a single record and more a fluid canvas for transgression. Each new version ruptured a new boundary—whether it was Billy Ray Cyrus singing about his Maserati or BTS member RM delivering bilingual wordplay. Once scorned as outsider, both to Nashville and the music industry at large, Lil Nas himself became the gatekeeper, and then opened the door as wide as possible for everyone else.

## 2. 'Con Altura' Rosalía and J Balvin ft. El Guincho

Spain's **Rosalía** (*opposite*) has made a name for herself with flamenco-inflected alt-pop (see: last year's hypnotizing *El mal querer*), while J Balvin reigns as one of Latin America's reggaeton kings. Together on "Con Altura" with producer El Guincho, they found a sweet spot mixing musical traditions from dembow to reggaeton while still flexing their individual powers. Over spare percussion, Rosalía's voice rings out with lilting precision; Balvin provides balance with his low-register rapping. The combination is potent, hinting at Latin music's diversity and creative future. The title is a TV personality's catchphrase that suggests reaching great heights in style; here, they show they've ascended.

## 3. 'Welcome to the Party' Pop Smoke

"Welcome to the Party" struck a nerve in 20-year-old rapper Pop Smoke's hometown of Brooklyn this summer, spilling out of every bodega, block party and car window. The song manically races forward, with Pop Smoke's syllables spilling out in clipped bursts over a shuddering bass line.

## 4. 'Juice' Lizzo

"Juice" is a funk-soul self-love dance anthem built to inspire confidence. That's no fluke—Lizzo's career has taken off thanks to her commitment to making listeners revel in her fun-loving lyrics and beats. "Juice" sounds like it was perfected in a test kitchen, equal parts joy, cheeky lyricism and timeless appeal.

## 5. 'Don't Start Now' Dua Lipa

On her 2017 debut album, Britain's Lipa established herself as a honey-voiced rising star of mainstream pop. On "Don't Start Now," she proves she has something to add to

the conversation: a propulsive, infectious disco sensibility. Made with juicy synths, bubbly percussion and bouncy vocal twists, the song celebrates independence: "Though it took some time to survive you," she sings, "I'm better on the other side." It sounds the arrival of a new pop era.

## 6. 'Crime Pays' Freddie Gibbs and Madlib

"Crime Pays" perfectly toes the line between the aesthetic sensibilities of the producer Madlib's sun-bleached breakbeats and Gibbs' gravelly gangster rap. While Madlib unearths a pristine jazz-fusion sample to conjure both nostalgia and unlimited possibility, Gibbs confronts the darker realities of chasing the American Dream: "Diamonds in my chain, yeah, I slang but I'm still a slave."

## 7. 'Too Much' Carly Rae Jepsen

Jepsen built a cult following on the power of her pure, heart-on-your-sleeve pop. "Too Much" synthesizes everything that makes the Canadian artist, best known for 2012's "Call Me Maybe," so beloved: on-the-nose lyrics, bright melody and intimate vocals. Best of all, "Too Much" feels honest. "When I feel it, then I feel it too much ... I'll do anything to get the rush," she sings, then turns it around: "Is this too much?" Her swing from wild bliss to insecurity—all over a shimmering dance tune—is a triumph.

## 8. 'So Hot You're Hurting My Feelings' Caroline Polachek

Polachek has long worked on the fringes of mainstream pop as a member of the band Chairlift and a songwriter for Beyoncé, Charli XCX and others. She takes center stage on *Pang*, her major-label debut, and the album standout is this cheekily named song propelled by handclaps and strutting guitars. But while the song sounds carefree, it drips with anxiety: "I cry on the dance floor, it's so embarrassing."

## 9. 'Simmer' Mahalia ft. Burna Boy

On "Simmer," breakout British R&B singer Mahalia repurposes the burbling bass line of a 1997 dancehall classic to anchor a love story in which a relationship verges on boiling over. A sultry and irrepressible appearance from the Nigerian singer Burna Boy turns the song from a B-side into a global summer anthem.

## 10. 'Crowded Table' The Highwomen

The Highwomen is a true supergroup, bringing together four of country music's most prolific women: Maren Morris, Brandi Carlile, Amanda Shires and Natalie Hemby. "Crowded Table" works as a kind of mission statement: to welcome everyone in a cutthroat world. They go in and out of duets and harmonies with generous sweetness—and a promise of community.

*Jepsen, Lizzo and Lipa re-energized pop this year with forward-thinking hits*







## Top 10 Theater

BY EBEN SHAPIRO

### 1. *The Lehman Trilogy*

*The Lehman Trilogy* is an electric commentary on the American Dream gone spectacularly awry. The story chronicles the rise and fall of the onetime Wall Street powerhouse Lehman Brothers, covering nearly two centuries of bristling ambition, greed, economic history and internecine family warfare. Despite that vast scope, only three stellar actors portray all of the play's dozens of characters, a remarkable accomplishment of both skill and endurance. The play was beautifully staged at Park Avenue Armory, which has turned into New York City's undisputed main stage for presenting cutting-edge, visually inventive theater. It's returning for a Broadway run—order your tickets now.

### 2. *The Inheritance*

Epic in ambition and scale, this flawed masterpiece about the lives of an intersecting group of gay men in New York City is too long and, at times, too talky. Yet there are so many moments of transcendence, particularly the end of the play's first part, where the accumulated power of Matthew Lopez's haunting, heartbreaking story left much of the audience weeping softly.

### 3. *Slave Play*

Yes, even in the days of a pussy-grabbing President, it is still possible to shock a Broadway audience. Jeremy O. Harris' *Slave Play* is a provocative exploration of sex, race and relationships, plus a very funny send-up of academic pretension. Expertly engineered to generate discomfort in the audience, its impact and images linger for days.

Annie McNamara and  
Sullivan Jones star in  
Harris' rousing *Slave Play*



### 4. *Hadestown*

It's hard to believe that work on this musical began more than a decade ago, since one of its most memorable songs is about a wall. An intertwined retelling of two Greek myths, *Hadestown* ran the table at the 2019 Tony Awards with 14 nominations; it ultimately won eight, including Best Musical, Best Original Score and Best Featured Actor in a Musical for standout star **André De Shields** (opposite). It also won a Tony for its steampunk scenic design of a most stylish Hades. But it's this show's prescience that will stick with you, as summed up in its lyrics: "We build the wall to keep us free ... The wall keeps out the enemy ... The enemy is poverty."

### 5. *What the Constitution Means to Me*

The Constitution! It's so funny! Heidi Schreck wrote and starred in *What the Constitution Means to Me*, which was a finalist for the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Schreck is a wonderful comedic actor, and her timely explanation of the intent, flaws and meaning of the Constitution arrived on Broadway at the moment in our nation's history when we needed it most.

### 6. *Antigone*

It sounds overwhelming: a Japanese-language version of Sophocles' nearly 2,500-year-old play, invoking elements of Noh theater and Buddhist philosophy, performed entirely in a pool of water. Yet it was spellbinding and probably the best concert I attended this year, thanks to mesmerizing accompaniment provided by world-class percussionists.

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**PETA**





## 7. *The Mother*

French actor Isabelle Huppert gave a delightfully unhinged performance as a pill-popping mother obsessed with her son and contemptuous of her husband (Chris Noth).

## 8. *True West*

This year, a lot of people expressed strong positive feelings about Keanu Reeves. I feel the same way about fellow Gen X icon Ethan Hawke—particularly after his mad, manic performance in this kinetic revival of Sam Shepard’s *True West*. (Cool desert set.) Paul Dano, as the “good” brother, hit his stride as the volume turned up to 11 and chaos ensued.

## 9. *The Sound Inside*

*The Sound Inside* is meticulously crafted to appeal to lovers of literature, a savvy tactic to seduce theatergoers who pay to wallow in the spoken word. Mary-Louise Parker plays a Yale creative-writing professor whose main

love in life is her collection of books. (“I’m a whore for first editions,” her character confesses.) The engrossing, layered plot simmers with tension, misdirection and advice for writers—a cliché like “simmers with tension” would never fly in this professor’s class. Parker is doing the kind of stripped-down work that Hollywood loves, but she transcends stereotypes by simply inhabiting the role.

## 10. *American Utopia*

Other than 90-minute plays with no intermission, the staged concert with narrative is one of Broadway’s best recent inventions. Bruce Springsteen set a high bar with his introspective 2017 show, but David Byrne meets that standard with his delightful *American Utopia*. Byrne, both artistic genius and working artist, fully embraces his thoughtful geekiness, which shines through in every aspect of this show. Wry commentary punctuates all your favorite Talking Heads songs, performed by a killer 12-piece band.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIK TANNER

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**TODAY'S CHILDHOOD POVERTY  
MUST NOT BECOME TOMORROW'S.**

## Top 10 Podcasts

BY ELIANA DOCKTERMAN

### 1. 1619

Four hundred years after the frigate *White Lion* brought slavery to America, *New York Times* writer Nikole Hannah-Jones reframes the country's history through the lens of that institution. Each episode demonstrates how our economy, political system and popular culture are rooted in the slave trade and built on the work of African Americans. Despite the podcast's sweeping goals, the stories are intimate and conversational—as with a standout episode in which culture critic Wesley Morris identifies the echoes of black artists' songs in the most unexpected genres.

### 2. You're Wrong About ...

You might think you know everything about Tonya Harding or O.J. Simpson, but as journalists Michael Hobbes and Sarah Marshall re-examine these and other stories from surprising new angles—like the perspective of Paula Barbieri, Simpson's girlfriend at the time of his trial—they prove even the most well-known figures have unplumbed depths. While they never sacrifice accuracy for the sake of fun, their breezy tone keeps even the heaviest of topics engaging.

### 3. Blank Check With Griffin & David

This consistently great movie podcast examines the filmography of one director at a time. But the series hit new heights this year when hosts Griffin Newman and David Sims focused on Hayao Miyazaki, the man behind masterworks like *Spirited Away* and *My Neighbor Totoro*—whose films are not available to stream, and thus criminally underappreciated outside of Japan. Newman and Sims offered listeners a chance to seek out his movies and participate in a critical conversation about how Americans can access and appreciate foreign-language films—which, as movies like *Parasite* generate Oscar buzz, is more relevant than ever.

### 4. The Last Days of August

This could have been a bad true-crime series: when an adult-film star named August Ames dies by suicide after writing a controversial tweet, several of her friends tell journalist Jon Ronson that they suspect foul play.

To Ronson's credit, he refuses to play amateur sleuth and build tension on a false supposition of murder. What he produces instead is a nuanced and considered portrait of Ames, a lonely woman who had a complicated relationship with an industry that both worshipped and abused her.

### 5. Moonface

The cinematic soundscape of creator James Kim's fiction podcast immediately draws the listener into the restaurants and dive bars of Downey, Calif., outside of Los Angeles. Paul (Joel Kim Booster) lives there with his mother, though their conversations are stilted: she speaks little English, he little Korean. To his friends, Paul cites the language barrier as the reason he hasn't come out to his family. As he tries to bridge the emotional and linguistic gap, the show trusts that non-Korean speakers will understand the sentiments, if not every word, of their conversations: the struggle to be understood is universal.

### 6. Decoder Ring

Slate critic Willa Paskin explores a bizarre and delightful cultural phenomenon each month, from "Baby Shark" to Chuck E. Cheese, to try to understand what makes people obsessed with seemingly arbitrary touchstones. These fixations can spin out of control, leading to toxic fights on forums or basements full of broken animatronic critters. But Paskin lends a sympathetic ear to fanboys and fangirls to understand how the strangest media can elicit an emotional attachment.



## 7. Scattered

When comedian Chris Garcia's father died, he requested that his family scatter his ashes off the coast of his homeland, Cuba. But Garcia's mother had no interest in returning to the country where her husband was forced to work in an internment camp and received electroshock therapy. Garcia seizes the opportunity to learn about his parents' immigration—but he leavens the harrowing stories with hilarious asides, like when his mother obsesses over the singer Pitbull. It's the sort of deeply personal account that's essential at a moment when immigration is so politicized.

## 8. Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend

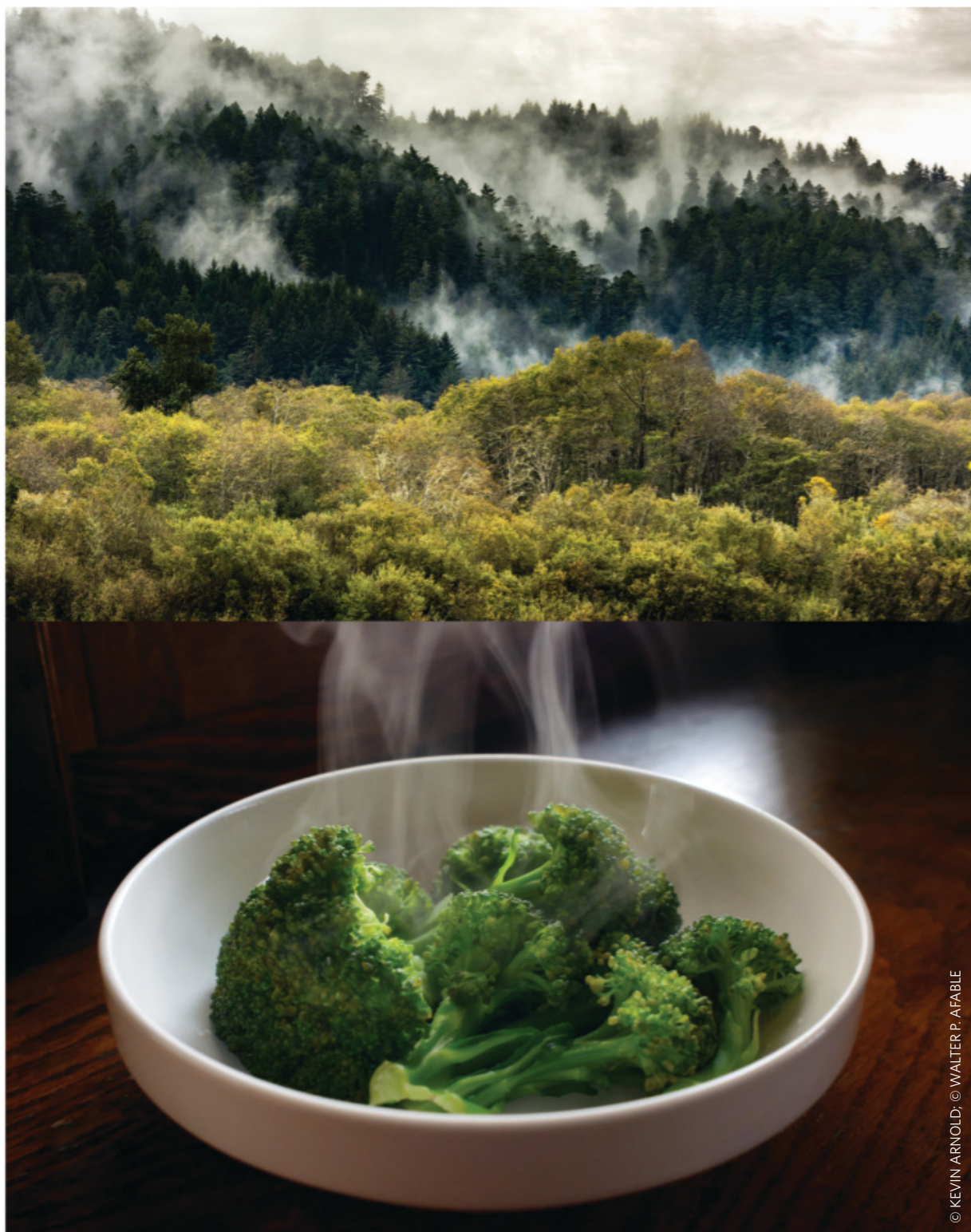
The jokey premise of the show is that Conan O'Brien has no real friends and wants to use the podcast to force celebrities to hang out with him. In fact, his years-long relationships with veterans of comedy like Tina Fey and Will Ferrell are what make this podcast funnier and more insightful than just another interview podcast. He recalls war stories from the set of *Saturday Night Live* and embarrassing anecdotes that a journalist would have no way of unearthing.

## 9. Mobituaries

CBS correspondent Mo Rocca hosts a surprisingly fun podcast about death. Each episode he eulogizes a different person or thing—from Sammy Davis Jr. to two trees whose deaths sparked an ugly turn in a football rivalry between competing schools. He approaches each subject earnestly and curiously, enlisting the likes of Bill Clinton to reflect on being inaugurated the day Audrey Hepburn died, or Tony Award winners to write a show tune commemorating Thomas Paine.

## 10. Spectacular Failures

Lauren Ober recounts the epic meltdowns of companies like MoviePass and Toys "R" Us with a healthy dose of skepticism: when she reports that the implosion of U-Haul was preceded by boardroom brawls between brothers, she jokes, "There's not enough Xanax in the world to get me to go into business with my family." In reporting on how many of these CEOs simply rebrand or start over, leaving legions of unemployed workers in their wake, Ober exposes the "failing up" culture that pervades Silicon Valley, Wall Street and—as in the episode about Donald Trump's Atlantic City casinos—the White House.



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# 7 Questions

**Greta Gerwig** The Oscar-nominated filmmaker on her adaptation of *Little Women*, a banner year for female directors and directing while secretly pregnant

**D**o you remember when you first encountered Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*?

It must have been read to me, because I don't remember a time when I didn't know who Jo March was. I don't know if I wanted to be a writer, which is why I liked Jo March, or Jo March was a writer so I wanted to be a writer too. But I did the thing you can only do with books as a child, where your own autobiography and the contents of a book merge.

**It's been adapted many times. What made you want to adapt it now?**

I reread the book as an adult, and I was bowled over by how modern it was, how much it was about women, ambition, art and money. There were lines that could have been written yesterday. It was a chance to address things that were so personal, and also to do something radical with it. I think you have license with material that is beloved, because you can start with a common language.

**Speaking of modern, there's a scene in the movie when Laura Dern's Marmee says, "I am angry nearly every day of my life." It sounds like a nod to female rage in 2019. But that was in the book?** I am having them say the dialogue with such controlled chaos and choreographed cacophony that it comes across as having just been written by me, when in fact every word is either from the book or Alcott's journals, letters or another book she's written. If you strip away this pre-Victorian morality, what you have is ambitious, passionate, angry, sexual, interesting women who don't fit into the boxes the world has given them.

**Did Alcott have amazing foresight?**

I think she was one of the people the future spoke through. I don't think she necessarily knew what she was accomplishing by telling the lives of girls and women as if they were

**“WE ARE STILL FIGURING OUT HOW TO TELL STORIES ABOUT WOMEN THAT INVOLVE MORE THAN MARRIAGE OR DEATH”**



important, because they *are* important. I think narratively we are still figuring out how to tell stories about women that involve more than marriage or death.

**When you became the fifth woman nominated for an Oscar for Best Director, for *Lady Bird* in 2018, you were held up as an example of how far women behind the camera have come and still have to go. What was that like?** I live really close to the New School and New York University, and these younger women come up to me and say, “I saw your film and I want to make my own films.” Being recognized by my peers in the Academy, and then having that translate to young women directly—it’s the reason I do it.

**There are many great films by women in contention this awards season, and they tend to be discussed as a group. Is that helpful or harmful?** It’s a banner year, and we should feel good about that and try to repeat it. It feels that there is both a sisterhood, which is wonderful because nobody wants to be at the dance party on their own, and also that their films are being put alongside great male filmmakers’ without an asterisk. I’m happy for it to be special *and* not special at the same time.

**You filmed *Little Women* while secretly pregnant. Some people are amazed when they hear of a woman accomplishing something great while pregnant. Others say it treats it as a condition to be overcome. What do you think?** I feel very lucky that I was able to direct this movie while pregnant. I don’t want anything to be used as another way that women can feel bad. I’m amazed at women who have kids, who don’t have kids, who keep working, who step back. We are just figuring out how to have this conversation—for directors, for doctors, for all kinds of women. We’re just at the beginning of it. —ELIZA BERMAN





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Wilms tumor

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